

Green

Queer

Erotic

Love

Magic



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THE INCIPIT

Escaping the incarcerating city, its polluting, industrial chains slipped,
The feral wildness calls with songs of vital madness and networked green succulence.

Order is transfigured but not abandoned in the verdant grove,
Civilisation is defied and abandoned for queer and ancient reality.

Here is intimacy, viscosity and energy, in the heart of Nysa's son,
Erotic reality changes consciousness and creates naturalistic and fruitful vines.

Coercion has disappeared from this world as love rushes in,
Love that is unfettered, unrestricted, that grows everywhere like ivy.

Let us share this madness together, exploitation a faded memory,
Let us dance and move together in a world made of transforming magic and what can be
imagined.



GREEN

It is the time of monsters.

The time of desolation.

The time of dull, mechanical acquisition.

The time of over-consumption.

Billionaires in their Bond lairs dream of controlling the world with their "AI", unaware that they are the robots whose intelligence is artificial.

Compassionless.

Unfeeling.

Consumed by greed and power.

Self-programmed to follow their own orders.

The master criminal has summoned the other criminals to give fealty with the promise that they may act unfettered provided they acknowledge his kingship.

And so they assembled and did worship, concocting new horrors even as they did.

We shall spy on the population.

We shall cheat them.

Exploit them.

Control them.

Manipulate them.

They shall not do anything we do not know about or countenance.

They will live their lives in our controlled space.

No more pretending.

We shall do it openly.

All hail the king.

All hail his power.

All hail death.

“Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life.

The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type.”

Thus spoke Zarathustra.

Meanwhile, in the forest, beyond the concrete, glass and steel, a different atmosphere pre-dominates.

Green.

Green, yet so vulnerable.

Life, profuse and profligate.

Life, attractive and vibrant.

Life, cooperative and interactive.

Green.

It was all so simple, once upon a time.

Before the kings came there was just life, just green.

But now poison seeps into the green.

Men with machines come to crop and clear it.

Horror upon horror.

Mass murder.

Torture.

The earth dies screaming.

But they cannot hear its screams

For they think it is just dead resources.

They think that what they can possess is theirs.

And life is irrelevant.

The green turns red.
The red turns black.
After what's been done
Will the green come back?

I set off one day
Not knowing where I would go
But I headed for the forest
It felt safer, welcoming
The vision of Dionysos in my head was strong
If only I could find his grove,
Feel his intoxication with life and death,
Succumb to his madness,
Be nourished by the vine.

Dionysos, the mad god
Dionysos, the vital god
Dionysos, the wood god
Dionysos, the shapeshifter
Dionysos, whom death cannot hold
Dionysos, beyond logic, the exploder of reason
Dionysos, the passionate and the imaginary
Dionysos, the intoxicator of all in a world of green and fruitful life.

The beings of the wild places and the spirits of animality are drawn together
As one.

Life wants only to live
It is in love with more of itself
It is in love with creation
From the nothing comes something
From the dirt comes beauty
From death comes life.

And if life can come from nothing, or from death, then what chance do the manipulators have, the kings and their slaves who go about their sterilizing business only to imagine that they enrich themselves? A poverty of imagination.

The only riches are living riches and they want to create a world of dead acquisitions.
Last man standing on a dead planet is no great achievement.
What is a safe full of dead things next to a world of living interconnections?
What is gold stamped with the head of a tyrant next to a heaving forest of intoxicated life?
What is the reason of people who can only count next to the mad intoxication with life that Dionysos brings?

Fecund communion or sterility is your choice.
Would you have green shoots of life everywhere...
Or ashes?
Would you see the world torn apart by the selfish actions of cold-hearted killers...
Or would you join in the festival of life in the grove of Dionysos?
Would you swim in lakes of wine, milk and honey that flow up naturally from the earth...
Or mourn the disappearance of the lakes and rivers,

the poisoning of your water,
the death of the seas?

The nothingness provides abundantly, all by itself, attracted to life
But the king hoards unjustly and decrees that you shall have nothing.

A pox on this earth.

A pox on this green.

A pox on this life.

May all be acquired and that which is not smited and damned.

If the king shall not have it then you shall not either.

"Lay waste! Destroy it all," roars the king in his anger.

"If I cannot have it then neither can they."

And his minions, loosed upon the earth, set about acquiring and controlling what they can
and destroying the rest.

The green turns red.

The red turns black.

After what's been done

Will the green come back?

Somewhere in the forest

There is a shaded path through the tall trees

As you walk along it you may meet Hekate, goddess of the crossroads and sorcery,

Or Pan, hoofed god of the wild places, who seductively plays his lecherous music.

There too you may espy Artemis, goddess of moon and hunt.

But should you see her do not stare lest she rend you limb from limb for she is chaste.

Continuing on the way, should you persevere and not offend these wild deities,

You may find your way to the grove of Dionysos and be invited to join his revelry.

But beware!

You will need to abandon all that you have ever known and valued here in the grove.

The intoxication will be complete.

The madness will be all-consuming.

You will forget your world of money and things.

You will forget the sterile horrors of civilisation and the values of the moralistic.

They have no meaning here amongst the green

And are ANATHEMA.

Here there is only life, death and intoxication,

Madness, pleasure and imagination,

Communion, joy, attraction.

Abandon your lives of technological sterility!

Abandon your ways of death and poisoning!

Abandon your meaningless acquisition!

Abandon your logic of numbers!

Would you become intoxicated with life?

Would you be filled with its madness?

Would you be nourished by the vine

And become one with the non-partisan Way?

Life just wants more of itself, is not concerned with this and that. To create life and love is everything.

The one, the All, working together in acts of love that create the green.

But when human beings get ideas and imagine themselves kings then they set themselves against life.

The green exists for itself, because it can, and not as resources for others. It wanders on its way.

Those who have agendas have forsaken life, forgotten the intoxication and the madness,
And submitted to the reason of sterility and abandonment of life.

Only nihilism awaits, a nihilism which only annihilates, a nihilism which only destroys and which has no imagination for life but only endless nothing without transformation.

The green turns red.

The red turns black.

After what's been done

Will the green come back?

To re-enchant the world,

For this did Dionysos come, for this he raves in his grove,

For this did Hekate, Pan and Artemis appear in the forest as wild, imaginative sprites.

The wild is alive,

The feral gather,

The outlaw stirs,

The heretics rub their hands together.

The technocrat, the capitalist and the architects of sterilization will gather to work their infernal plan upon life.

They will rouse their adepts to frothing fury through their channels of lies.

They will send out their minions to rip deep wounds into the heart of the earth, dealing death where they can.

They will broadcast gibberish and nonsense in order to confuse and infest the many with their deceptions.

Many will be beguiled.

Even more will be rendered paralysed by the shock and awe tactics.

Only those infused with love of life will stand,

Those who know that reality goes beyond life and death,

Those who know that, if life comes from nothing, then it cannot be killed for it simply finds a way to return.

Yet without you - as the All reimagines itself as something else.

How foolish to imagine a world of acquisition in opposition to life, a world that could never live.

How foolish to imagine a world of exploitation, a world that only takes life.

How foolish to imagine a world of reason when life is the passion of becoming.

How foolish to imagine, oh speck of dust, that you are anything but nothing.

Yes, you can kill

But isn't life the real blessing?

To wander through the fecund forest full of life and cooperation

Is better than to glory in the piles of misery and death you have created.

With forest magic and Dionysian madness the feral outlaws make their stand
Life against the sterile
Green against the ash
Their only law is erotic love,
Their only goal is more of it
For green is love
And the sterile king and his minions know nothing of that.
Love gives birth to love
Sterility only makes sterile,
The one is willing and cooperative,
The other forced coercion, vile violation.
The loving earth is violated by the sterility cult,
The crypto-kings breathe only death wherever they go as they seek to exploit all life.

But life will not be contained.
Look between the cracks in the concrete and even there green finds a way.
The sterility cult spreads its pathogens liberally
But life fights back as that which seeks to out-imagine the cult of death.
What is dead cannot imagine
But what is alive can do no other for life is imagination.
An end to all butcher shops!
An end to imprisoned domestication!
An end to incarcerated life!
An end to false borders which are merely the imaginings of diseased minds!

To re-green the world,

To make fit and fertile.

Let this be our task: wild love!

Once upon a time a story was told about a garden.

That garden was an endless storehouse of eternal nourishment, wild and free.

The inhabitants of that garden could have enjoyed its bounty forever.

But, instead, they trespassed the order of things and destroyed the primal harmony.

This story only retells the history of our species.

Once we lived in harmony with nature. We lived from its bounty without any cares.

There was an order of things and all were equal according to it.

But, seeking to control it, we imagine to make it submit to us and proclaim our arrogant superiority over it.

Life set against life destroys the unspeakable primal harmony that sustains all.

When the delicate balance is upset, nothing can survive and only turmoil and distress can follow, extremity upon extremity, pain upon pain.

The wise must look beyond themselves to see a bigger picture.

The wise must look beyond themselves to the network of green sustaining everything.

Earth, air, fire and water, all are necessary for life.

We are part of a system we tamper with at our peril.

Life is a madness to be intoxicated with, not the accountant's spreadsheet.

Wild and free!

Intoxicated and feral!

Passionate and without care!

The reveries of Dionysos or the slaughter houses of the sterile.

The green turns red.
The red turns black.
After what's been done
Will the green come back?

The people listen
To what the bad men say,
The men who kill the green
Each and ev'ry day.

Your phone, your TV
and your friend,
Can you trust them,
On them depend?

In the forest
And in the wood
is the home of madness
The heart of good

But in the city
and in the town
Only corruption and poison
Can be found

Yet even here

Green finds a way
To grow in grime
Each and ev'ry day

Life is a gift,
It comes from nothing
but passion, attraction
And copious loving

The elements
They want to mate
They feed and
Interpenetrate

Their copulation
Is satiation,
In nature
There is no frustration

Life must be free,
The green must roam,
Ev'rywhere to find
A fertile home

Even if the earth
Turns hot-baked black

The green, it wants

To still come back

And so the task

It still remains

The green to prosper,

To break the chains

The green turns red.

The red turns black.

After what's been done

Will the green come back?



queer

The green *is queer*.

What is the nature of sexual nature?

What is "nature loving"?

Queernaturecultures.

In her book *The Companion Species Manifesto*, a companion piece to her "A Cyborg Manifesto" which talks quite a lot about dogs, Donna Haraway discusses the idea "naturecultures". As might be intuited simply from reading the word, it is a compound idea, one which refuses to see either "nature" or "culture" separated from the other. Haraway's quite simple point, at least as I read it, is that nature is cultural and cultures are natural. To me this appears to be the idea that everything human beings imagine is an integration of what is beyond them with their appropriation and constitution of it *as such and such* (which, of course, is a fiction but couldn't be anything else anyway). So this idea is about the consequences of interaction and relationship and, incidentally, their unavoidability. David Bell, in his essay "Queernaturecultures" taken from the book *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, wants to apply this to queer, and to the green that is queer, as well. In doing so, he broaches the subject of using nature (which is also a culture) as an authority or arguing that it somehow provides an incontestable ground of sexual truth. (You will not be surprised to find that, actually, it doesn't.)

The linking of green nature together with queer creates one vast subject which almost certainly fits into no single academic space. You are looking at queer theory, ethical and philosophical studies, various environmental and biological sciences, etc., at the very least. Certainly both social and natural sciences find themselves implicated here. That will not be easy for academics to take for they are used to their sharp delineations of relevance and subject matter and are sensitive to "outsiders" stepping on the toes of

their subjects. But no matter. The green is queer and they will just have to deal with it, in interdisciplinary fashion, as best they can.

Bell's essay begins with a description of the activities of the "eco-porn" political organisation (which still seems to be going in 2025) "Fuck For Forest". This group was begun by two Norwegians in 2004 when they fucked on stage before an audience at an outdoor music festival in Kristiansand as the band The Cumshots played. The Norwegian authorities not being amenable to such behaviour, this original couple, who were making both sexual and ecological points by their act of public coitus, swiftly moved to Berlin thereafter to avoid the wheels of justice running over them. In their writing, found online, Fuck For Forest explicitly link sex with nature. For example:

"Our goal is to save nature, but it is also important to show the beauty of natural sex and sexuality. We believe that through a better relationship to our spiritual and sexual body, we can change the reality around us. . . . We believe that humanity's bad relationship to sexuality has a lot in common with the destroying of nature. Sexuality is a beautiful part of nature. . . . Sexuality and nature is connected. We are basically here because of sex. But open sexuality is often looked down upon as something dirty and strange. We felt sexuality was treated like nature, with disrespect. So why not use pure, open-minded sexuality to put focus on this unnatural way of treating this planet?"

Here, as Bell as commentator upon this suggests, we are talking about an "embodied politics" and "the supposed naturalness of sex" and "nature-loving through sex acts" that are set in an imagined "approving wilderness". In this wilderness sex and sexuality are not taboo and the human body, raw and on display and in interaction with other bodies in the same state, finds itself at home. Free, unjudged and unjudgeable sex is here set in "the

wild" as context and so that very same wild is sexualised in the same move. But it then risks becoming a sex without rules, taboos or discipline. What if, in my terms, it should become wild, intoxicated, mad sex, Dionysian sex, sex beyond any constraining reason or logic, something as apparently feral as the nature it is set in? Is this fear why prudes everywhere look down upon outdoor or public sex and portray those who partake in it as uncivilised wild animals who have forsaken the appropriate human reason and so their ethical humanity? Is the instruction to only engage in sexuality in private, behind closed doors and shuttered curtains, an attempt to separate sex from its here argued wildness in an absolute way which includes even the ability to think of it as an outdoor and so wild activity?

Fuck For Forest don't consider themselves exhibitionists. They are making what they consider to be legitimate and serious points, both about sex and nature (although how separate these ideas really are is very much the point it seems to me), and they raise money by filming the sex in nature which subscribers can pay to view. One point they make here is that this is all genuine and serious. Its not just another capitalist angle on porn to make those engaged in it rich. Fuck For Forest even try to make the point that its not really porn. Its simply lovers in nature and "porn" might be seen as a judgment on that which the organisation does not make. Instead, they claim to be both raising funds for ecological projects (some such projects have refused their money when they found out where it came from in acts of astounding prudery) and "democratising" and "naturalising" sex in the process. The suggestion is that we are "animals" and are "a part of nature" and that sex in nature is a matter of "life". To come upon naked people fucking in the woods (this has happened to me as I was fucking in some woods in Germany) they want to be seen as natural and uncontroversial rather than shocking. At the very least, Fuck for Forest seem to pose the questions "What is sex?" and "What is nature?" They also pose

the question "What do sex and nature have to do with each other?" In the queer green the answer is "Almost certainly everything".

In the last century and a half naturalists, zoologists and scientists of nature more generally have had their eyes opened somewhat (although many struggle to keep them closed so as not to see on purpose) in regard to wild sexuality - and particularly to the fact that *the more you actually look at nature, the more genuinely queer it becomes, with examples of "queer animals" popping up everywhere*. Two books Bell singles out particularly focus on this, Joan Roughgarden's *Evolution's Rainbow* (which readers of my previous work will be familiar with as its a resource I have often interacted with myself) and Bruce Bagemihl's *Biological Exuberance*, a book I shall come onto myself shortly in this section of my book. Both of these books, as well as some others, as Bell has it:

"posit... nonhuman (a.k.a. more-than-human) animal sex acts as evidence of the naturalness of homosexuality (as well as other nonreproductive sexual and gender practices, including transvestism and transgender). Nonhuman animal homosexuality is thus naturalized through the figure of the "queer animal", while homophobia is denaturalized as a culturally specific human response since animals do not exhibit hostility toward same-sex acts in their presence."

Nature, that is, in and from its wildness, quite normally and regularly gives birth to queer (homosexual, "cross-dressing", intersex, gender-crossing) animals without any suggestion or judgment that anything has "gone wrong" or is awry in the process and in direct contradiction to human pronouncements about "nature", even scientifically understood. Nature, we may then assume, is quite literally queer.

It is here, however, that "What is natural?" - or that there even is a "natural" in a meaningful way to begin with - makes a comeback as a conceptual tool. (Haraway's "naturecultures" become very relevant here.) Is "a sexuality" an essential feature of natural organisms? What is the status of sexual practice or practices vis-a-vis individual organisms as natural? Are such organisms implanted or imprinted with static sexualities from birth, programming against which they cannot fight, or is something else the case? Is "a sexuality" even ever a static thing or is it something more dynamic and flexible, even "polymorphous"? Is "sexuality" the same from organism to organism or can each example of an organism have its own kind of sexuality with its own dynamic range? Is sexuality essential or acquired - or some mixture of the two which suggests sexuality is educable or suggestible? Is there a "truth of human sexuality"? Are homosexual sexual acts - acts still to this day often thought illegitimate because "unnatural" - somehow "made legitimate" if they can be essentialised or renaturalised into things? What is the relationship of sexuality to embodied morphology? These are not inconsequential questions in human terms when people exist who insist on certain answers being true - either for themselves in particular or everyone in general. In the human world we have rights that are formulated based on sex (and the also implicated gender). So what people think about this matters and it matters whether people think of sexual interactions as "natural" or not - even if the very idea of that turns out to be somewhat confused in the light of Haraway's naturecultural ruminations.

This is not a left/right political issue for, as Bell shows, those on the left can "appeal to nature" as authority just as much as those on the right can. In fact, in these terms, it simply becomes a back and forth argument about "what is natural" as if something being endowed with the mystical quality "natural" was the deciding and authoritative factor here. Anything "natural", in this argument, is legitimate and anything "unnatural" is not.

But this becomes more complicated if all natures are cultural and all cultures are natural. Sometimes, of course, apparently natural (which of course means rhetorical, fictional) categories are brought to bear in order to do argumentative work. One such is "reproduction" with the argument made that sex IS FOR reproduction and, therefore, only reproductive sex is "natural" and so worthy of being esteemed as legitimate. We can see clearly in this argument how "the nature of sex" becomes a factor in the subject overall for, if this were true, it would seemingly cut some ice. So we have to ask this "nature of sex" question (even if, post-Haraway, we also have to accept that there will be no "nature of sex" that isn't simultaneously a cultural thing).

We see this more clearly when Bell takes a brief tour through the history of sexuality studies (in humans or animals, it doesn't really matter) where we find that science has actively resisted the notion that nature is queer. Homosexuality in non-human animals, as in their human counterparts, is explained away in as many ingeniously deliberate ways as it can be just so long as the conclusion can be avoided that nature is queer. Often this is on the basis of Darwinian evolutionary theory which harps on a lot about "sexual selection" and is based on the idea of reproduction as a matter of species survival and development. It is not too difficult to see that if your theory of survival is based on evolutionary development of sexual beings then examples of that species which either can't procreate in their couplings or have no wish to would seem to be superfluous to said evolutionary purpose. Bell suggests that such a theory makes heterosexual sex natural and the means of survival whereas queer sex is apparently useless and unnatural (unless it can somehow be smuggled, however poorly, into the reproductive purpose of sex). The obvious point to make here, however, in the light of what has already been said, is that this is a cultural project interacting with nature, one which tries to define a "good nature" and a "bad nature" that nature itself does not know of. Here we can talk about "the

domestication of non-human animals" and "the culturalisation of humans" as aspects of such endeavours, endeavours which seemingly attempt to tell nature what it is and what it isn't, and what is, or is not, natural or permissible within it. Is that a legitimate task? If it is, it will only be so within some culture motivated by its own ideology, values and beliefs. In short, it will be an imaginative project of its own, an appropriation or domestication of nature, rather than a reflection of it. We are back with the notion that no one "gets reality right". All interactions with it are contingent - as Bruce Bagemihl shows in his book which steps away, at points, from Western science and engages indigenous cosmologies and interactions with the natural world at some length which yield very, very different results and ones much more queer in content and emphasis. In arguing over "how sex is", different cultures of the world have come up with wildly varying answers. Are any "the truth of sex"?

Queer theory, as a body of ethics, values and ideas, has no truck with the essentialist argument itself. A queer theorist would not argue that "Sexuality X is natural (and so normal) because it is an inherent, essential characteristic of an organism". This, ironically, would put said theorist at odds with some queers who "explain" their queerness by recourse to exactly such an essentialist argument. Sometimes in comments I have posted on social media I have had one or two gay people angrily remonstrating with me if I have said that gayness (I would say the same of transness) is not an inherent biological characteristic of a human being (or, in fact, of anything else). I myself tend towards more social (although not entirely social) answers. These people seem to find an all-consuming value in the idea that they are gay (or trans) simply because they were born gay (or trans) where "gay" (or "trans") is a built-in biological feature they can do nothing about in the same way as they can do nothing about the chromosomes they received either. Essentially, they are saying they are gay and/or trans robots who cannot defeat their

genetic pre-programming much like most others are heterosexual and cis robots in exactly the same "locked in" situation.

People like me, however, see all this as a fiction - even if some see it as a necessary fiction - and there are obviously people in the world who do not like to be told that they are believing a useful story - because they don't like the idea that what they are believing is a "story" in the first place. Instead, they want to believe that other most useful of stories that the story they believe in is real, material, part of the fabric of matter itself. But this is not queer. This is simply an appeal to nature as authority. It is what Alan Moore has called "Nazi science" in that all eugenicists anywhere ever have thought that people just were things essentially and so that, therefore, what we need to do is eradicate the ones we don't like and keep the ones we do. When you make people into a thing, in their very fabric, you condemn them to a fate (nature) complete with a past and a future and a set of its meanings and values. This is nature as a determinative script. But is that something we should want to do? Should we want to naturalise and essentialise sexuality and gender into things? Or is the queer thing to do in the context of a wild, feral nature of experience something else entirely, something more "natureculture" as Donna Haraway puts it?

Bell doesn't answer this question but goes on to discuss naturists and naturism - better known as simply nudism. Here in his sights are those nudists who want to sharply distinguish nudism from sex - which is far from all of them but is certainly some of them. Such people essentially want to make nudists safe from the charge of simply being sex-obsessed as if naked bodies are automatically sexually-coded and sexually active and contextualised. Here the nudity might be contextualised by "health" or "wholeness" or some kind of psychological freedom supposedly attained by the lack of clothes but it is simultaneously hard not to argue that, at the same time, some kind of morality is

insidiously trying to avoid the nudity being linked with those dirty sex people who have given themselves over to immoral cravings. So you get the phenomenon of "family" nudist camps where sex is banned but nudity is not and those who cannot resist the pleasures of the flesh are quietly, or not so quietly, asked to leave. In such places single men, imagined to be sexually predatory as a class, might be refused entry or membership as a matter of routine. Bell here makes the point that in such reasoning nudity is naturalised but the desire to sexualise it is made cultural. Where such nudity is family oriented it may make gay and trans nudity cultural activities as well (these sometimes being thought, by a certain constituency, as "sex-obsessed" orientations in themselves anyway). "Naked naturalness" becomes a cis heterosexual (and chaste) pursuit.

But things aren't this simple for many people, even those you might imagine were otherwise quite liberal in their social views, find even simple nudity completely objectionable. So whilst some imagine their non-sexualised nudity is displaying some kind of natural authenticity, others would quite routinely think them perverse and corrupting. Bell regards nudism of this kind as being "paradoxical" precisely because it makes the claim that there can be such a thing as "banal nudity" in a context in which the normalisation of clothes in society has made the lack of them, all by itself, something that has become denaturalised. We see this, for example, when numerous countries outlaw being nude, or exposing certain body parts, in public. Western society in particular (taking it rhetorically as a whole) has closed off many spaces to public nudity and even more to sexualised nudity. In doing so, it valorises the body, whether sexualised or not, as taboo, forbidden, which, of course, generates its own magnetic attractions as a consequence.

All this begs several questions. It begs the question, for example, of the sexuality of the body and its relation, which it surely has, to the erotic. I wonder if wild nature, of which

humans are a part, is not, in all its embodied viscosity, engaged in erotic entanglement simply by existing? If nature is erotic, as at least some imagine it to be in its constantly transformative physical interaction and relationship, then how can bodies not be? Can we not at least suggest that the naked body is a boundary crossing phenomenon, one that risks entering into the wild green nature from which the clothed recuse themselves? If nudity is "natural" then why is sexual nudity not? And if natural is good and allowable then is this in all cases or only some? (Why is nudity more "natural" than public masturbation, for example?) In this way, it is very easy to denaturalise sexual nudity by playing up a healthy version of nudity which is a disguised puritanism which actually cuts off nudity and public sexuality from the wild it came from. Notably such "safe nudity" has to be intensively policed and manufactured and that is perhaps telling its own story, a story of the civilisation of natural madness by civilised reason.

For Bell these three examples of political eco-sex, queer animals and nudism all come down to Haraway's naturecultural suggestion. "Nature itself is not natural: nature is cultural". Or, to put it another way, when you naturalise something, or want to naturalise or denaturalise something, THAT IS A CULTURAL MOVE. Haraway's way out of this is simply to talk of naturecultures, to say that natures and cultures are entwined (and obviously in implicitly multiple ways). Natures beget cultures beget natures beget cultures. As a result, "nature" is no longer an authority any more than a culture is. As a consequence of this, perhaps we need to stop playing authoritarian games about what counts as final authority in a game of "who is in charge?" and start thinking about naturecultures as spaces for queer desires to find liberation. If the green is queer then it is not about binding it or restricting its growth or putting it in a tightly defined area but about liberating it. It is not about the reasons and logics of "how to behave", the logistics

of control, but about the mad intoxication of (and with) desire. It is surely also about the fact that nature is public, wild and free.

A second essay in *Queer Ecologies* is Stacy Alaimo's entitled "Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of 'Queer Animals'" and in it she wants to pursue better ways of "engaging with materiality" than she imagines has been the case heretofore. In some ways this essay is like Bell's in that it certainly engages nature and culture as ideas (perhaps here queer is culture and nature is, well, nature) and poses the question of how the then seemingly contradictory "queer green places" can come to be. In this, the essay once more relies on the books of Roughgarden and Bagemihl as catalogues of theory and practice as well as their copious examples of the queer in nature as it actually exists. Both of those books have the word "diversity" in their subtitles and it is their aim to set out to show that diversity is precisely the important fact of nature itself, an engine of its operation as what it is. This is all part of an agenda which sets out to correct the false picture of natural reality which has been imposed upon nature by modern Western science, a discourse with its own naturecultural historical reasons for existing as it does in the first place. Here we are reminded that science is not simply and abstractly "getting things right" but is a historically and culturally conditioned discourse which finds what that situation needs to find and finds it satisfying in doing so as a consequence of this. This is, in fact, an example of nature begetting culture begetting nature begetting culture, etc.

That it has found some things and not others, and even that it has resisted finding some things and not others, is a further consequence of this. Reasons and logics and theories find what they are able to find and are resistant to things which fall outside of their imagined understanding. As a result, Alaimo can talk about "the pernicious and persistent

articulation of homosexuality with what is unnatural" in mainstream Western scientific discourse going back at least two centuries and of the books of Bagemihl and Roughgarden, with their focus on diversity, "making sexual diversity part of a larger biodiversity". It turns out that it might make a difference if you, on the one hand, imagine a strict order of reproductive nature following a binary sexual scheme inherent in all creatures or if, on the other hand, you imagine "the howling wilderness of bestial perversions". (Of course, ethics and politics might well come into that as well to motivate your choices and the reasons which seem to motivate them in their turn.) You might watch a natural history film, perhaps presented by David Attenborough, which details the life cycle of some seemingly happily married pair of birds or mammals and imagine all of nature is like that but what will you do then when reading Roughgarden and Bagemihl, learning that there are literally hundreds of documented cases of gay sexual practice, and gay parents, in nature? Queer animals, gay, "cross-dressing", intersex and even cross-gender, are a multi-various and polymorphous fact of life: they are natural reality. That is what must be accounted for and experienced, not the chaste fantasy of the Western scientific tradition. Or, as Alaimo puts this:

"we need to embrace the possibilities for the sexual diversity of animal behavior to help us continue to transform our most basic sense of what nature and culture mean."

Here an important point, as I hinted at when discussing the previous essay of David Bell, is that, whatever the nature of the case, queer animals are NOT "a moral model or embodiment of some static universal law". They are just what can happen, happening. Nothing follows from nature. Nature offers no judgment of right or wrong, legitimate or illegitimate, and it is not telling you what to do or to be. It is not an arbitrating authority. What it is, as I will come to in due course, is an "exuberance", a diversity, "a proliferation of

astonishing differences that make nonsense of biological reductionism." Nature, we might say, is anti-fascist inasmuch as it abhors a monoculture. If you want to talk about "laws of nature" (and I concede that I mostly don't) then one would be that nature holds no prejudice against the different and the diverse. When everything is the same then one effective enemy can kill every example of it. But when things are diverse that is a naturally in-built and developed means of survival of at least some of the life of the species (a point I myself got from reading Roughgarden's book). What's more, if we add in Haraway's idea of naturecultures to this mix, as Alaimo explicitly does, then life becomes not simply a matter of species as "genetically driven machines" but of "creatures (as) embedded within and creating other 'worlds' or naturecultures". Life doesn't happen in the abstract according to rules. It is a participating in the creation, maintenance and development of it. It is the possibility for the new and the different, the developed and the diversified.

The imagined (and often posited) nature/culture divide makes a comeback in Alaimo's essay too. It is in familiar guise when scientists and other commentators can imagine that sex in nature is for reproduction (animals not being thought to have discovered sex for pleasure) but that humans (who are categorically separate from the rest of nature in this thinking) have discovered (or perhaps invented) sex as a cultural activity. This assertion seems to assume that human beings are the only beings that have invented culture and so that, presumably, the animals we look down upon simply engage in biologically-coded impulses, having sex to reproduce because they have no choice in the matter. The problem with this dogmatic idea is that the hundreds of documented cases of same-sex sexual activity in hundreds of different kinds of animal seem to completely give the lie to it. Doing so, it seems to drag humans back into the wild that such thinking had attempted to extricate us from by making us unique in our ability to be cultural. And so "humans and

animals" take their place as discursive entities in a story about natural reality in which that "reality" is often meant to be determinative and authoritative in a way I have already suggested it isn't and can't be. People surely don't suggest that "animal sex" is purely "reproductive" for nothing nor act as if human beings were creatures entirely different in kind to all the rest in order not to make a point. But if, as it turns out, the scientific gaze had been modulated by a rather moralistic kind of eyesight, one which saw good honest "natural" reproduction but managed to miss all the non-reproductive and "cultural" sex for pleasure and as play, then it may be that the story being told was for other reasons than describing what was actually going on in nature at all in the first place.

Alaimo and Bell together, then, make similar points here about the uses and abuses of a nature/culture kind of argument and the purposes to which it is put. That which is "natural" can be argued to be more foundational and materialist in regard to putative reality and that argued more cultural becomes more dubious and voluntaristic as a consequence. Such a divide accords with a similar animal/human divide too (where both these divides are, of course, simply discursive). The result has been an often heteronormative conception of nature and what Alaimo regards, in the language of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, as a "closeting" of queer animals. This, in turn, accords with Sedgwick's observation in *The Epistemology of the Closet* that:

"These ignorances, far from being pieces of the originary dark, are produced by and correspond to particular knowledges and circulate as part of particular regimes of truth."

This is to say that human beings, discursively separated from nature, do not tell nature what it is (as if they could) but they might very well be telling themselves what they have become and how they imagine to imagine themselves in a categorised and reasoned out

world made sane for humanity. This, as Alaimo remarks, has often seemed to involve creating animal/human oppositions and reducing animal sexuality to some form of deterministic impulse. But not always. This is fortunate when Alaimo observes that a deterministic nature is often regarded simply as a resource to be acquired and exploited by brute cultural forces. Things thought not to be playing a part in their existence can more easily simply be regarded as things which are "just there" and the human exploitation of this planet has ample evidence for that. This, however, is in contradiction of the actual evidence for life in the green wild itself where plants and animals actively cooperate and interact to common benefit in myriad ways not merely sexual. It is a very moot point how much, if any, of this is in any way "deterministic" for it would seem, on closer inspection, that life itself, as a property or characteristic, is "self-organising" or "participatory". As Alaimo then argues:

"In terms of environmental ethics and politics, it is crucial to acknowledge animals as cultural beings, enmeshed in social organizations, acting, interacting, and communicating. An understanding of animal cultures critiques the ideology of nature as resource, blank slate for cultural inscription, or brute, mechanistic force."

Humans, as we know from the inside out, are not biological machines without feelings and these feelings both contextualise and articulate how and for what reasons the human being does things and becomes what they are. But, that being the case, why should we imagine all other animals *are* biological machines without feelings? Why, in fact, should we even imagine plants are? Could these other forms of life not have their own versions of cultures, their own forms of pleasure, their own kinds of desire? Do not multiple forms of life engage in learned behaviours? What motivates forms of life to be and act as they do? Might not pleasure and desire be two possible options? What does a tree or a bonobo

or an elephant want? Alaimo, in telling us that "the pursuit of sexual pleasure is one of the most quintessentially 'cultural' sorts of activities", uses the work of Bagemihl in *Biological Exuberance* to point out that the bonobo appears to use hand signals to "initiate sexual activity and negotiate various body positions" in sex which may be with partners of the same or the opposite sex. There is also an account here of a macaque that can apparently fashion a form of dildo for itself. Why would a macaque want to do that? What is clear is that such discoveries of desires satisfied and pleasures sought once more makes messy the nature/culture divides some want to maintain. Haraway's naturecultures seem once more readily apparent and provide a better explanation of what is going on on the ground. It is simply not possible to maintain a hard and fast nature/culture, animal/human divide. What it seems to be more a matter of, in fact, is sociability and sociality, things which involve, in plants and animals generally, things such as desire, effort, playfulness, pleasure and sex. Consequently, as Alaimo says of "queer animals":

"Queer animals may... foster an ontology in which pleasure and eroticism are neither the result of genetically determined biological drives nor tools in cultural machinations, but are creative forces simultaneously emergent within and affecting a multitude of naturecultures. Pleasure, in this sense, may be understood within Karen Barad's notion of performativity as 'materialist, naturalist, and posthumanist,' 'that allows matter its due as an active participant in the world's becoming, its ongoing 'intra-activity'."

This does not seem remotely controversial to me if one accepts the premise that life itself, in any example of it, is self-organising and, in general terms, finds activity in the social realm generally beneficial in ways that extend beyond simply itself - as of necessity. Life, whatever it is, is NOT a machine but develops its own ways, habits and naturecultures by which it may participate in its own development in tandem with both an

environment and with other forms of life (necessarily even beyond its own species). It would seem rather dogmatic to suggest, in this discursive context, that desire and pleasure play no part in this except for one singular species. What's more, we may be minded to ask, in evolutionary frame of mind, how anything could ever evolve if it were forced by static "laws of nature", a nature that accords with some imagined "reason", to obey said laws, being under obligation to them. It would in fact seem more sensible to imagine that *transgression* were then in fact the way things evolve, that breaking boundaries constantly in an expression of wild, feral madness was how one developed beyond habits and norms and so created a new, "more successful" form of existence. Could we imagine a world in which life follows its pleasures and desires and, in so doing, prospers itself? I mean this not merely or even as individuals - but as communities, as species, and as a body of life as a whole. Imagine a planet full of life that runs on the basis of the pleasure and desire that can be created by the interactions and relations of myriad forms of life together. Thought of as a system of relationships, this does not seem far-fetched at all. What does seem far-fetched is that each example of life is acting only for and by itself in which everything else is either merely superfluous or simply resources to be exploited in a cold, hard, uninvolved way. More is going on here than "selfish genes" according to a biologist's logic of selfishness. However:

"A universe of differing naturecultures, propelled by the pursuit of pleasure as well as other forces, can hardly serve as a foundation for biological reductionism, gender essentialism, heteronormativity, or models of human exceptionalism. The multitude of utterly different models of courtship, sexual activity, childrearing arrangements, gender, transsexualism, and transvestism that Bagemihl and Roughgarden document portray animal lifeworlds that cannot be understood in reductionist ways. Myra J. Hird argues that biology 'provides a

wealth of evidence to confound static notions of sexual difference'. Her exuberant essay encourages us to imagine 'The Joy of Sex for plants, fungi, and bacteria'."

And this is what I think we should do in a world of the queer green that gives the impression of being an erotic, interactive sociality. Contrary to our attempts at method, animals are not merely different, less developed, versions of us. Animal naturecultures, plant naturecultures, will quite naturally be their own exactly as they should be. We may get a better understanding here of this idea by paying some attention to the seeming illogic of the imagined "quantum realm" in Physics which underlies all the predictability of things when considered in the macro realm of "normal science". So why should the queer green not be that which escapes our logic in its apparent self-directed madness as the substrate of the apparently ordered natural world? There are no straight lines in nature but that does not stop nature existing in ways more amazing than anything straight a human being could ever build. And so:

"Despite the scientific aim to make sense of the world, to categorize, to map, to find causal relations, many who write about sexual diversity in nonhuman animals are struck with the sense that the remarkable variance regarding sex, gender, reproduction, and childrearing among animals defies our modes of categorization, even explodes our sense of being able to make sense of it all. These epiphanic moments of wonder ignite an epistemological-ethical sense in which, suddenly, the world is not only more queer than one could have imagined, but more surprisingly itself, meaning that it confounds our categories and systems of understanding. In other words, queer animals elude perfect modes of capture..."

By eluding perfect modes of capture, queer animals dramatize emergent worlds of desire, action, agency, and interactivity that can never be reduced to a background or resource

against which the human defines himself. Haraway, defining her term 'companion species,' explains: 'There are no pre-constituted subjects and objects, and no single sources, unitary actors, or final ends. . . . A bestiary of agencies, kinds of relatings, and scores of time trump the imaginings of even the most baroque cosmologists'. Such responses emanate from a queer, green, place, in which pleasure, desire, and the proliferation of differing lifeworlds and interactions provoke intense, ethical, reactions."

What I describe as "transgression" (as is my way), Bruce Bagemihl describes as "exuberance" in his book *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*, a book both Alaimo and Bell rely on for their essays. Bagemihl says of this idea, in summary form, that:

"The essence of Biological Exuberance is that natural systems are driven as much by abundance and excess as they are by limitation and practicality. Seen in this light, homosexuality and nonreproductive heterosexuality are 'expected' occurrences—they are one manifestation of an overall 'extravagance' of biological systems that has many other expressions."

A first point to note here is that Bagemihl is talking about a system. Nature IS A WHOLE. Within that whole, however, he imagines both a vast AND AN EXPECTED diversity. "Exuberance" or, in my terms, "transgression" (of a more common "norm") are necessary features of the system rather than aberrations of, and deviations from, it. This then makes it much harder to speak of something in wild nature as "an anomaly" for who knows what greater systemic and inter-relational purpose it may serve simply in its existence? This makes the nature of the whole itself transformational or metamorphic. The ability to change or to be different, and to accommodate these things, is, systemically, a necessary

and required one. Dionysos the shapeshifter will fit in here perfectly (and not only because, in his argument, Bagemihl diverges from Western science to ask what we can learn from indigenous wisdom around the world such as in the historical North American naturecultures where the Two Spirit, the Shape-Shifter and the Trickster-Transformer are evidenced entities). Indeed, it is in the detailed interpretation of indigenous accounts (from people who actually lived, or still live, in wild nature, cheek by jowl with the life there in ways modern Western researchers can only dream of) that Bagemihl teases out a nature far more wild, sexual, queer and diverse than often puritanical and binary Westerners have wanted to entertain. Such non-Western worlds can easily become places of admixture and transformation, of kaleidoscopic diversity, and are rich in crossover between imaginative elements and observations of genuine natural phenomena. What stands out to me especially, reading Bagemihl's extravagant accounts, is that these indigenous people seem much more integrated into the wild green than we moderns who are often mostly alienated from it. And yet we are the ones who claim to "understand" it when many of us barely even experience it. This arrogance, in fact, exactly mirrors a contrast I set up earlier when discussing the green where we travel from the incarcerating civilised realm of "knowledge" and "understanding" to embrace instead the "experience" and "madness" and "intoxication" of the Dionysian revelry. What is needed is not so much an instrumental knowledge which imagines to have the power of reasoned control as an intimate, personal and overwhelming experience of the socially diverse, erotic sexuality of wild reality. Or so I claim.

In terms of his own argument for "biological exuberance", which relies heavily on naturecultural observation of non-Western kinds, Bagemihl says:

"It is striking that in so many cultures that recognize some kind of alternate gender/sexuality system in animals, human homosexuality/transgender are also routinely recognized and even honored. Perhaps, then, what is most valuable about indigenous views of animal homosexuality/transgender is not so much the 'accuracy' of beliefs about this species or that, but the overall worldview imparted by these cultures: a view of both animals and people in which sexuality and gender are each realms of multiple possibilities.

In fact, ideas about human and animal homosexuality tend to be mutually reinforcing. When people consider homosexuality/transgender to be an accepted part of human reality, they are not surprised to find gender and sexual variability in animals as well. Similarly, a culture living in intimate association with the natural world will undoubtedly encounter animal homosexuality/transgender on a routine basis; these observations in turn contribute to the culture's view of such things as an integral part of human life. On the other hand, people accustomed to seeing homosexuality/transgender as an aberration will balk at encountering the phenomena in animals. And when a culture no longer lives in close association with wilderness, it will have less opportunity to encounter natural examples of variation in gender and sexual expression."

What Bagemihl then appears to be saying to me is that we need to return to nature, to a world of less arbitrary relationships, if we want to truly experience its queer realities and become informed by that experience. Perhaps that is why so many of us have become estranged from it as we were herded into the set, centrally-controlled lives we now lead?

The green is wild

The green is queer

But how would you know

If you never come near?

The green is wild

The green is free

Civilised prisons

Are for me and thee

The green turns red.

The red turns black.

After what's been done

Will the green come back?

Let us approach all this scientifically with Bagemihl:

"One of the more important insights to emerge from chaos theory is that the natural world often behaves in seemingly inexplicable or 'counterproductive' ways as part of its 'normal' functioning. According to Sally Goerner (in her discussion of chaos, evolution, and deep ecology), 'Time and again, nonlinear models show that apparently aberrant, illogical behavior is, in fact, a completely lawful part of the system.' Similarly, biologist Donald Worster remarks that 'scientists are beginning to focus on what they had long managed to avoid seeing. The world is more complex than we ever imagined ... and indeed, some would add, ever can imagine.' More than half a century earlier, evolutionary biologist J. B. S. Haldane presaged these thoughts when he commented that 'the universe is not only queerer than we suppose, it is queerer than we can suppose'—words we used to open this book. Although none of these scientists is referring specifically to homosexuality, the alternate systems of gender and sexuality found throughout the animal kingdom are

exactly the sort of 'discontinuities' and 'irrational' events that should be generated in a 'chaotic' system.

Particularly relevant in this respect is Goerner's statement of one of five basic 'principles' of chaos: 'Nonlinear systems may exhibit qualitative transformations of behavior (bifurcations). The idea is simple: a single system may exhibit many different forms of behavior—all the result of the same basic dynamic. One equation, many faces. A corollary to this idea is that a system may have ... multiple competing forms of behavior, each perhaps a hairsbreadth away, each representing stable mutual-effect organization.' Transposed to the realm of sexuality, this idea offers the potential for intriguing insights: heterosexuality, homosexuality, and all variants in between can be seen as alternative manifestations of a single sexual 'dynamic,' as it were, which is itself part of a much larger nonlinear system. The 'flux' of this system is played out in endless and infinitely varying expressions within individual lives, through various communities, between different species, across sequences of time, and so on and so forth."

Bagemihl's conclusion here should then be obvious: "deviation from the norm is part of the norm." But the seeming trick here is to understand how a system - something operating at the macro level - is reliant on the more chaotic diversity that constitutes it (a very Hermetic or alchemical thing to want to do). Here Bagemihl wants to integrate the Gaia theory of James Lovelock and others (which, in summary form, posits that "the sum of all living and non-living matter forms a single self-regulating entity, analogous to a giant living organism") and the reality of a biodiversity which includes sexual diversity (where "biodiversity" is regarded as "the principle that the vitality of a biological system is a direct consequence of the diversity it contains: as diversity increases, so does stability and resilience"). This is saying that not only is nature queer but being queer makes it more

stable and more resilient, more of a dynamic system of relationships. What Bagemihl zeroes in on is then exactly that quality of diversity which, since it exists, must be doing something. Earlier Bagemihl had remarked that "The existence of a natural phenomenon is its function" and I regard this as being the case in regard to diversity specifically. Plasticity and diversity of behaviour and morphology Bagemihl remarks again and again to be an aspect of evolutionary advantage. The ability to "not play by the rules" is as important as the ability to follow them. Consequently:

"Behavioral versatility is best regarded as a manifestation of the larger 'chaotic ordering' or nonlinearity of the world, rather than merely a response to it. A broader synergy is involved, a pattern of overall adaptability that can be realized in ways that do not necessarily entail any literal 'contribution' to reproduction or any straightforward 'improvement' in an animal's well-being. In other words, it is the presence of behavioral flexibility in a system that is as valuable, if not more so, than its actual concrete 'usefulness' or 'functionality.'

Taken together, these observations—of sexual diversity, and the strength imparted by such sexual variability—lead to an important conclusion. The concept of biodiversity should be extended to include not only the genetic variety, but also the systems of social organization found within a species or ecosystem. In other words, sexual and gender systems are an essential measure of biological vitality. The more diverse patterns of social/sexual organization that a species or biological system contains—including homosexuality, transgender, and nonreproductive heterosexuality—the stronger that system will be. Mating and courtship patterns are, after all, as much a part of the 'complexity' of an ecosystem as the number of species it contains—and same-sex activity is an integral part of those mating and courtship systems in many animals. It stands to reason, then, that a rich mosaic of different social patterns should increase the vitality of a system, even when such

patterns themselves are apparently 'unproductive' or are found in only a fraction of the population.

In a rain forest that contains many hundreds of thousands of species of mammals, birds, insects, plants, and so on, the 'purpose' of yet one more kind of beetle may be difficult to see—except when understood in terms of its contribution to the overall complexity and vitality of the environment. Similarly, the 'function' of a particular social or sexual behavior such as homosexual courtship or heterosexual reverse mounting may seem minimal or even nonexistent at the level of a particular species or individual. But its contribution to the overall strength of the system is independent of such 'utility' (or lack thereof) and is also independent of the proportion of the population that participates in it. Every individual, every behavior—whether productive or 'counterproductive,' comprising 1 percent or 99 percent of the population—has a part to play. Its role is not in the tapestry of life, but as the tapestry of life: its existence is its 'function.' Biological diversity is intrinsically valuable, and homosexuality/transgender is one reflection of that diversity."

This leads Bagemihl to argue, following Georges Bataille, that "exuberance is the source and essence of life, from which all other patterns flow" based on an analysis of the whole as a matter of energy use and consumption. Life (if in fact not simply everything) is all about energy. That large hot ball of burning matter some 150 million kilometres away (roughly speaking) is why any life exists at all and its all a matter of pure energy. Every day we receive energy from it, as all the life forms on earth do too, and that energy must be used (which actually means "transformed") somehow. Bataille argued, as Bagemihl does in following his lead, that our issue is dealing with this constant and excessive source of energy in what constitutes a vast energy cycle that extends far beyond this planet. (Do

you find it so strange that the smallest thing would be tangled up with the biggest? Don't.) As Bagemihl continues:

"Virtually all outpouring of activity, both (pro)creative and destructive—the development of baroque ornament and pattern (or its distillation into concentrated minimalism), the wanton consumption of animal and plant foods (or mass starvations in their absence), the extreme elaboration of social systems (encompassing both 'complex' and 'simple' forms), the florescence of new species and the extinction of others, the cycles of burgeoning and decaying biomass—all of these can be seen, ultimately, as mechanisms that 'use up' or express this excess energy. According to this view, life should in fact be full of 'wasteful,' 'extravagant,' and 'excessive' activities... [This] exuberance is [then] the source and essence of life, from which all other patterns flow.

Most importantly, the concept of Biological Exuberance sheds new light on the phenomenon of homosexuality. If, as Bataille suggests, life is characterized by what appear to be 'wasteful' activities, then what could be more 'wasteful' than homosexuality and nonprocreative heterosexuality (and gender systems)? If sexual reproduction itself is a means of using up excess biochemical energy, then obviously sexual or social activity that does not itself lead to reproduction will be an even greater 'squandering' of such energy. Homosexuality/transgender is simply one of the many expressions of the natural intensity or 'exuberance' of biological systems. Contrary to what we have all been taught in high school, reproduction is not the ultimate 'purpose' or inevitable outcome of biology. It is simply one consequence of a much larger pattern of energy 'expenditure,' in which the overriding force is the need to use up excess. In the process, many organisms end up passing on their genes, but just as many lead lives in which reproduction figures scarcely at all. Earth's profusion simply will not be 'contained' within procreation: it wells up and spills over

and beyond this Lives of intense briefness or sustained incandescence—whether procreative or just creative—each is fueled by the generosity of existence. The equation of life turns on both prodigious fecundity and fruitless prodigality."

One of the many takeaways from Bruce Bagemihl's book is that people of indigenous nations have, over the centuries, built up insights on nature and even concerning existence itself which Western science, in its own narrow and culturally specific way, has never managed. I do not have time here to go into any of them in any detail so you will have to read *Biological Exuberance* for yourself for that. But one of these is reported of one Frank LaPena, a traditional poet and artist of the Wintu tribe of what is now called northern California, who says:

"The earth is alive and exists as a series of interconnected systems where contradictions as well as confirmations are valid expressions of wholeness."

This is compatible with ideas such as the Gaia hypothesis, Daoism or the Hermetic belief system of "As above, so below" and is not so far away from more Western notions such as quantum physics. Each imagine, in their own way and for their own reasons to be sure, a systematic view of all life together in an environment as a system of relationships. They show, taken together for a moment, that there are many ways to describe things but that no one way amounts to nature's own script. Whether we talk about cosmic power, the sun's rays or the actions of minute particles, we might actually in the end only be talking about the transformations of forms of energy within a system, a system, moreover, compelled to metamorphosis and prodigious in its own ability to diversify. As Bagemihl takes up this story:

"Ironically, one need not look into the future or on 'alien worlds' to find appropriate models: shape-shifting and morphing creatures are not merely the stuff of fantasy. The animal world—right now, here on earth—is brimming with countless gender variations and shimmering sexual possibilities: entire lizard species that consist only of females who reproduce by virgin birth and also have sex with each other; or the multigendered society of the Ruff, with four distinct categories of male birds, some of whom court and mate with one another; or female Spotted Hyenas and Bears who copulate and give birth through their 'penile' clitorides, and male Greater Rheas who possess 'vaginal' phalluses (like the females of their species) and raise young in two-father families; or the vibrant transsexualities of coral reef fish, and the dazzling intersexualities of gynandromorphs and chimeras. In their quest for 'postmodern' patterns of gender and sexuality, human beings are simply catching up with the species that have preceded us in evolving sexual and gender diversity—and the aboriginal cultures that have long recognized this."

Transformation? The transgressive and the queer? Diversity? It is all around us. IT IS US. It is the force which energises the universe and the characteristic which enables its longevity:

"Biological Exuberance simply takes our intuitive understanding of the diversity of life and makes it the essence of existence. We needn't be living in material wealth or in an isolated wilderness to experience this lavishness, either. The weeds struggling through a sidewalk crack or choking an abandoned urban plot are every bit as sumptuous as the most refined of rose gardens, the most magnificent of mountain forests—if not more so. Gifted with this heightened understanding, we can now find the intoxication contained in a glass of water, where before even the most sophisticated wine seemed flavorless (to paraphrase Hakim Bey)."

Dionysos the shapeshifter bids us "Come!"

Into this wild, transformative wilderness

We have nothing to fear

From queer

The green

Prodigious in its diversity

Utters words

Of queerly erotic entanglement and intoxication

The green turns red.

The red turns black.

After what's been done

Will the green come back?

EROTIC

Once upon a time
(So the scientists say)
There was a big bang
That lit up the first day

A great explosion
A grand orgasm
An expression of desire
An ejaculate spasm

Hot elements flung out into space
Coalesced and mingled, interlaced
Life and passion was infused
Casual combining, the constant muse

From the dark earth came abundant life
As roots sought food and friends in strife
Cooperation to secure
Luxuriant entanglings to procure

Species mixed and freely joined
In unions frequent, unalloyed
Food and succour, their desire,
Abundant life, why they conspire

Self-organising strength and growth

Intimate without an oath
Penetrating all around
In it together, tightly bound

A heaving mass of vital life
No husband, brother, sister, wife
A great entangled reproduction
Without the need for skilled seduction

Entangling with the ones you're with
Is no contemporary myth
Creation has no moral rule
But constitutes erotic school

Rule of life: implicit attraction
The need for others, not abstraction
How could we live, how could we go
Unless two "H" had loved the "O"?

Elements, compounds, new admixtures,
Alch'my of life with no set fixtures
Without a plan, it writhes together
A fecund, fertile erotic weather

Materiality it bursts
With erotic actions, hungers, thirsts,

Life: erotic to the core
Soaking in it: more, more, more!

Rolling in spunk we satiate
Taking madness for a mate
Blood and sweat and tears and piss
An earthy, filthy, erotic bliss

Sweet and juicy,
Warm and wet,
Attraction
That you can't forget

To feel the touch
Enjoy the texture
To join
In an erotic mixture

The sexual imagination
An internal stimulation
Infusing things with pleasurable meaning
Desiring a rabid gleaning

Imperatives of interaction
A universe born from attraction
Pleasure, desire, magnetise

Bums and boobs, faces, thighs

Grouping once ourselves together

In the outdoors, much not never

Frolicking with pure delight

Entering those holes, so tight

Being in good company

Propagating harmony

An erotic fellow feeling

Constantly and most appealing

All ages can enjoy the pleasure

Indulge without a rule or measure

Appetites to satiate

Appendages we must fellate

Pleasure, desire, founts of good

Bodies, feeling, could and should

Neurons firing, filled with joy

No need here for the coy

A desire to feel and to see

Unstoppable pleasurability

The thrill, implicit in interaction

Requires no embarrassment or redaction

Bodies tactile, nudity,
All laid bare for us to see
Interaction will excite
Hidden feats of erotic might

Seeking in cooperation
Desiring pleasure in causation
Welcoming your cum donation
We smile and glow at sex creation

Two is comp'ny, three's a crowd
Be consumed by madness, its allowed
There is no god, there is no law
Suck until it hurts your jaw

Sex for fun and sex for pleasure
Desiring sex that's without measure
Universe made of desire
Share the pleasure, light the fire

Let the flames never go out
Int'macy must verily shout
If we would be passing strong
And endure for very long

Especially in the last ten years, I have read many books about anarchy and anarchism and many other books, pamphlets and essays written by self-declared anarchists. Exceedingly few of them, in propagandising for their anarchy, made an appeal to love as the motive for anarchy. And yet this is what I am going to do now, not least based on the green, queer and erotic sections of this book above which summon me to do so. Yet there are many other reasons for this decision as well and I am going to mention several of them in the space available below.

I begin where my explicit entry to "anarchism" began - with the words of Emma Goldman. At the beginning of her anarchist career, in the months after her lover Alexander Berkman had been imprisoned in 1892 for the attempted murder of the businessman, Frick (a plot in which she was involved), Goldman felt moved to take up her own activism. (We may reasonably conjecture that this was not least because she felt called to live up to the example Berkman had given and for which she felt somewhat responsible.) Just over a year after the events which had led to Berkman's imprisonment, Goldman herself gave a speech in New York to starving workers which would lead to her own imprisonment as she was accused of inciting a riot by her words which included something along the lines of taking what you needed if the rich would not let you have it. There is good reason to believe the police witnesses who testified to this were making the most of it but this is not my point in bringing this incident up. The point is that, while awaiting trial for this imagined crime, Goldman took part in her first major public interview for the *New York World* newspaper (owned by Joseph Pulitzer) which would bring her to public attention as a political thinker. This was only made more the case by her interviewer being Nellie Bly, a famous journalist of the time.

The key point for my purposes here is that Bly asks Goldman about her anarchism:

"BLY: 'When did you become an Anarchist, and what made you one?'

GOLDMAN: 'Oh, I have been one all my life, but I never really entered into the work until after the Chicago riot, seven years ago.' (Goldman is referring to the Haymarket riot when police shot randomly at a crowd and a group of known anarchists were rounded up and put to death under the excuse of them being involved in a bomb plot.)

BLY: 'Why are you one? What is your object? What did you hope to gain?'

GOLDMAN: 'We are all egoists. There are some that, if asked why they are Anarchists, will say, 'for the good of the people.' It is not true, and I do not say it. I am an Anarchist because I am an egoist. It pains me to see others suffer. I cannot bear it. I never hurt a man in my life, and I don't think I could. So, because what others suffer makes me suffer, I am an Anarchist and give my life to the cause, for only through it can be ended all suffering and want and unhappiness."

Goldman reveals several things about herself in this short exchange and in it I see the kernel of what I have come to call "social egoism" in my own formulation of anarchy (which takes a lot of instruction from reading a lot about Goldman's own life and her writings). Goldman is here concerned about others because their pains become her pains. Her attitude is that if someone (or more particularly someones in general) are in pain then that is her pain too. She describes this in terms of "egoism" - then a branch of anarchist thought or a way of understanding anarchy in general. (Goldman, as myself, was a hybrid thinker in anarchist terms, she bridged or united social anarchist and egoist anarchist concerns. She can consequently be criticised from both sides by more purist thinkers for her apparent syncretism.) Goldman was also an extremely erotic person, a person of great

passion and feeling who engaged in many loves during her life even if we restrict ourselves to those we know of. Putting all this together, I imagine that Goldman had a feeling for people, both in general and in particular, that motivated a desire to see them living in a world free from suffering where a foundational situation of basic happiness was available to all. Being a realist, this took the form, in an oppressive world, of wanting to free people from their suffering. I call this feeling "love". (Goldman, not least in her first decade of activity, was also, hardly coincidentally, a strong and vociferous proponent of "free love", love which was based on common affection and not bound by what she saw as the coercions of marriage. This was particularly appealing to women who were essentially domestic prisoners under the ethos of the time. "Let there be nothing but voluntary affection" says Goldman in this same interview. Goldman had no issue even with multiple voluntary romantic encounters albeit that, according to her personal temperament, she could only entertain these serially rather than concurrently.)

This "loving", and pro-love, attitude towards people in general was not unique to Goldman amongst an anarchist constituency. We find it also in her contemporary (and sometime colleague) Errico Malatesta, an Italian social anarchist, as well. If you read Davide Turcato's Errico Malatesta reader, *The Method of Freedom*, for example, you find there Malatesta talking of himself as "by nature affectionate and impassioned" and dreaming "of an ideal world in which all would love one another and be happy" in "The Republic Of The Boys And That Of The Bearded Men". In "Program And Organization Of The International Working Men's Association" this same Malatesta asks:

"What is the point of preaching brotherhood and love of one's neighbour when the proletarian has to fight for a crust of bread and is obliged, each and every day, to compete for it with his neighbour?"

In the same piece he later writes (in the programmatic and overarching way anarchist socialists of his type did):

"In the wake of the revolution, it shall be a moral duty incumbent upon all to display love and respect for one's fellow men, to protect the weak and the children, to work, to consider the interests of society in every individual action—in short, everything that science and experience has or may demonstrate useful to men."

Yet again in this same document Malatesta writes, in relation to "homeland and humanity":

"The dividing up of humanity into such a wide variety of homelands is also a by-product of the state of strife in which the human race has been living and still does. The International, which wants all men duty bound to think of themselves as brothers and to be held together by the close bonds of moral and material solidarity and to enjoy the world in common as their shared inheritance, yearns to amalgamate all homelands into one shared homeland, the world; and to banish from men's hearts the sentiment of patriotism, this being the exclusive or at any rate preferential love for the land or the people where and into whom one was born, the claim to an entitlement in one's homeland to more rights than those born elsewhere and which boils down to indifference, rivalry, and hatred vis à vis other peoples and thus to contention and war."

In the section on "family" in this document Malatesta writes:

"With woman released from her subjection to man, which was the original root of the family; with the religious prejudices that have misrepresented the true nature of sexual

relations, now banished; with private ownership and its concomitant right of succession that currently forms the real basis of the family, done away with; with children, the protection of whom is the sole justification for the family as such, entrusted to the care of society, there is no further reason for the present family as a union legitimized by society and made more or less indissoluble, to exist. Sexual relations should be wholly free and governed solely by love and fellow-feeling. The International calls for the abolition of all bonds that currently hamper freedom in love, be these enshrined in law or merely enforced by custom and social convention, so-called."

On "instruction and education" he says:

"Education, of which instruction is the technical aspect, should derive not only from the school but from the entire social environment and should be designed above all to develop the sentiment of love and respect for people, to ensure the success of whichever habits and tastes best serve the general good and elevate the intellectual, moral, and material assets of the individual to the highest possible level."

On "crimes and punishments" he comments:

"Once society is so arranged that the freedom and well-being of one is complemented by the freedom and well-being of another, once work itself turns into an outlet for the bodily need for exercise and activity, once one is loved and respected from birth and schooled in love and respect for others, there will be no more criminality deriving from society."

As his summing up of his entire manifesto here, Malatesta writes:

"To sum up: the International is out to replace: God with SCIENCE; the State with the spontaneous organization of humanity upon the foundations of universal solidarity, which is to say, ANARCHY; the homeland with the UNITY OF THE HUMAN CONSORTIUM; private ownership with COMMUNISM; the Family with LOVE; Strife between men with the BATTLE AGAINST NATURE ON BEHALF OF THE HAPPINESS OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS. And in order to bring this ideal about, it reckons there is no option but the COMPLETE AND SIMULTANEOUS ABOLITION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY AND POLITICAL POWER, by means of REVOLUTION mounted against the Government and against the PROPRIETED."

Writing in perhaps his most famous pamphlet, *Anarchy*, Malatesta writes about the evolutionary socialisation of human beings in the following terms:

"as now evolved, man could not live apart from his fellows without falling back into a state of animalism. Through the refinement of sensibility, with the multiplication of social relationships, and through habit impressed on the species by hereditary transmission for thousands of centuries, this need of social life, this interchange of thought and of affection between man and man has become a mode of being necessary for our organism. It has been transformed into sympathy, friendship, and love, and subsists independently of the material advantages that association procures. So much is this the case, that man will often face suffering of every kind, and even death, for the satisfaction of these sentiments."

In this same pamphlet, in an argument about government's lack of necessity, Malatesta claims that we need not be motivated by its coercions, neither associations with capitalist motivations, but rather "those associations inspired by the love of humanity"... [where] "each will find his interests synonymous with the interests of every one else". In "A Bit of Theory" Malatesta says quite clearly that, "What we require is the triumph of love and

freedom" and that "It is through love of mankind that we are revolutionists". In a more summary statement in the piece "Anarchy and Violence" Malatesta comments:

"Anarchy is freedom in solidarity. It is only through the harmonizing of interests, through voluntary co-operation, through love, respect, and reciprocal tolerance, by persuasion, by example, and by the contagion of benevolence, that it can and ought to triumph."

In concluding this piece Malatesta writes that "Our doctrine is a doctrine of love". And so it goes on in this vein, here and there, for about 600 pages in this Malatesta Reader.

Malatesta's fellow Italian, the insurrectionary anarchist communist Luigi Galleani, wrote the following in his book *The End of Anarchism?* on the subject of human motives and in it he implicates love:

"As proponents of the broadest individual autonomy, we have shown that this absolute independence from any domination by either a majority or a minority, from any human oppression, cannot find a better or more vigilant security than in anarchist-communism: unlimited freedom in the satisfaction of needs; unlimited freedom in the choice of work."

Exceptional conditions of the moment or of the situation might require that we limit our inclinations as well as increase our work. In the future, as it happens at present, might we not, we who are in good health, tighten our belt a little in order to help people afflicted by an epidemic with food and medicine? Do we not, even now, if a sudden fire develops act as firemen? . . . As nurses, if an epidemic occurs? . . . As diggers in cases of flood or landslide? And doesn't this happen without command or coercion? . . . Without regard to individual inclinations or unusual risks? . . . All this is only in obedience to the voice surging from the

depth of every conscience, calling in the name of life, of preservation and solidarity with the species. And is not that voice the automatic and irresistible stimulus to the highest and noblest of our actions?

And is not that call valid? Is it not received with an outburst of love and concern such as has never greeted a commandment of god, an edict of a king, a law of parliament?"

In Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, one of the most famous of anarchist writings and a place where we might (whilst being yet still uneducated about it) expect to find plenteous encouragements to love, we find, instead, the following:

"Several works of importance were published in the years 1872–1886, dealing with the intelligence and the mental life of animals... and three of them dealt more especially with the subject under consideration; namely, Les Sociétés animales, by Espinas (Paris, 1877); La Lutte pour l'existence et l'association pour la lutte, a lecture by J. L. Lanessan (April 1881); and Louis Büchner's book, Liebe und Liebes-Leben in der Thierwelt, of which the first edition appeared in 1882 or 1883, and a second, much enlarged, in 1885. But excellent though each of these works is, they leave ample room for a work in which Mutual Aid would be considered, not only as an argument in favour of a pre-human origin of moral instincts, but also as a law of Nature and a factor of evolution. Espinas devoted his main attention to such animal societies (ants, bees) as are established upon a physiological division of labour, and though his work is full of admirable hints in all possible directions, it was written at a time when the evolution of human societies could not yet be treated with the knowledge we now possess. Lanessan's lecture has more the character of a brilliantly laid-out general plan of a work, in which mutual support would be dealt with, beginning with rocks in the sea, and then passing in review the world of plants, of animals and men. As to Büchner's

work, suggestive though it is and rich in facts, I could not agree with its leading idea. The book begins with a hymn to Love, and nearly all its illustrations are intended to prove the existence of love and sympathy among animals. However, to reduce animal sociability to love and sympathy means to reduce its generality and its importance, just as human ethics based upon love and personal sympathy only have contributed to narrow the comprehension of the moral feeling as a whole. It is not love to my neighbour—whom I often do not know at all—which induces me to seize a pail of water and to rush towards his house when I see it on fire; it is a far wider, even though more vague feeling or instinct of human solidarity and sociability which moves me. So it is also with animals. It is not love, and not even sympathy (understood in its proper sense) which induces a herd of ruminants or of horses to form a ring in order to resist an attack of wolves; not love which induces wolves to form a pack for hunting; not love which induces kittens or lambs to play, or a dozen of species of young birds to spend their days together in the autumn; and it is neither love nor personal sympathy which induces many thousand fallow-deer scattered over a territory as large as France to form into a score of separate herds, all marching towards a given spot, in order to cross there a river. It is a feeling infinitely wider than love or personal sympathy—an instinct that has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution, and which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from the practice of mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life.

The importance of this distinction will be easily appreciated by the student of animal psychology, and the more so by the student of human ethics. Love, sympathy and self-sacrifice certainly play an immense part in the progressive development of our moral feelings. But it is not love and not even sympathy upon which Society is based in mankind. It is the conscience—be it only at the stage of an instinct—of human solidarity. It is the

unconscious recognition of the force that is borrowed by each man from the practice of mutual aid; of the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all; and of the sense of justice, or equity, which brings the individual to consider the rights of every other individual as equal to his own. Upon this broad and necessary foundation the still higher moral feelings are developed."

Kropotkin here has a very strange and one might say moralistic, picky and particularistic, idea of love (Emma Goldman thought much the same of old Kropotkin and told him so to his face in his own house when he imagined that "free love" was not really a top anarchist concern - in contradiction of Goldman's own beliefs) and for the purposes of my thesis here we will need to interrogate it by basically (and eventually) asking the question: WHAT IS LOVE ANYWAY? as we go through the rest of *Mutual Aid* and beyond.

The problem there is that, in distinction to someone like his comrade Malatesta who writes about "love of humanity" all through his work (at least according to the comprehensive reader I consulted), Kropotkin does not - especially here in *Mutual Aid* which aims to argue for a more protean and biological origin for the instinct to mutual support (in distinction to mutual conflict) amongst animals in general and humans in particular. So the phrase "love of humanity", or similar, does not occur in this book and Kropotkin explains mutual aid, here as the closing of his argument and his book, in the following way:

"it is especially in the domain of ethics that the dominating importance of the mutual aid principle appears in full. That mutual aid is the real foundation of our ethical conceptions seems evident enough. But whatever the opinions as to the first origin of the mutual aid feeling or instinct may be—whether a biological or a supernatural cause is ascribed to it—

we must trace its existence as far back as to the lowest stages of the animal world; and from these stages we can follow its uninterrupted evolution, in opposition to a number of contrary agencies, through all degrees of human development, up to the present times. Even the new religions which were born from time to time—always at epochs when the mutual aid principle was falling into decay in the theocracies and despotic States of the East, or at the decline of the Roman Empire—even the new religions have only reaffirmed that same principle. They found their first supporters among the humble, in the lowest, downtrodden layers of society, where the mutual aid principle is the necessary foundation of every-day life; and the new forms of union which were introduced in the earliest Buddhist and Christian communities, in the Moravian brotherhoods and so on, took the character of a return to the best aspects of mutual aid in early tribal life.

Each time, however, that an attempt to return to this old principle was made, its fundamental idea itself was widened. From the clan it was extended to the stem, to the federation of stems, to the nation, and finally—in ideal, at least—to the whole of mankind. It was also refined at the same time. In primitive Buddhism, in primitive Christianity, in the writings of some of the Mussulman teachers, in the early movements of the Reform, and especially in the ethical and philosophical movements of the last century and of our own times, the total abandonment of the idea of revenge, or of “due reward”—of good for good and evil for evil—is affirmed more and more vigorously. The higher conception of “no revenge for wrongs,” and of freely giving more than one expects to receive from his neighbours, is proclaimed as being the real principle of morality—a principle superior to mere equivalence, equity, or justice, and more conducive to happiness. And man is appealed to to be guided in his acts, not merely by love, which is always personal, or at the best tribal, but by the perception of his oneness with each human being. In the practice of mutual aid, which we can retrace to the earliest beginnings of evolution, we thus find the positive and

undoubted origin of our ethical conceptions; and we can affirm that in the ethical progress of man, mutual support—not mutual struggle—has had the leading part. In its wide extension, even at the present time, we also see the best guarantee of a still loftier evolution of our race."

The key there, of course, for me is that Kropotkin, once again, makes the explicit point that this is not simply a matter of "love", a thing he imagines more personal or, at most, tribal in origin as opposed to his imagined "instinct for mutual aid" which he imagines implicit within species. I find this analysis questionable and not least because feelings, emotions, motivations and actions do not come with descriptions attached. Neither do words map, in an inherent and irrefutable way, one to one to such things. Who is to say, then, that what Kropotkin called "mutual aid" is NOT done from or with love or that these factors overlap considerably to produce the effects he observes? How can Kropotkin be so dogmatic as to absolutely rule out the presence of what is called love in the calculus of mutual aid? I think the issue here, in the final analysis, is not Kropotkin's analysis of mutual aid in his book of the same name (which, in my view, has stood the test of time) but his appraisal of love and its part in affairs which, to my eyes at least, seems narrow, somewhat dismissive and unjustifiably excluded from his considerations.

Max Stirner, meanwhile, writing *The Unique and Its Property* in the mid 1840s, thought of those who professed to "love humanity" as liberal philanthropic do gooders who brought their moralistic prejudices with them into society. In some cases, I am sure he was right. (You will certainly find several of these ultimately authoritarian "do gooders" who crack on about "benevolence" far too much in anarchist sources and I did researching this chapter.) But not in every case (as already suggested). Consequently, in an excoriating passage towards the end of his book, Stirner writes the following:

"Get away from me with your 'love of humanity'! Sneak in, you philanthropist, into the 'dens of vice;' linger sometime in the throng of the great city. Won't you everywhere find sin, and sin, and yet more sin? Won't you wail over corrupt humanity, lament about the monstrous egoism? Will you see a rich person without finding him ruthless and 'egoistic'? You may already call yourself an atheist, but you remain true to the Christian feeling that a camel will more easily go through the eye of a needle than a rich person will not be an 'inhuman monster.' How many do you see anyway that you wouldn't throw into the 'egoistic mass'? What then has your love of humanity found? Nothing but unlovable human beings! And where do they all come from? From you, from your love of humanity! You've brought the sinner in your head with you, therefore you found him, therefore you shoved him in everywhere. If you don't call people sinners, then they aren't; you alone are the creator of sinners; you, who imagine that you love people, you yourself throw them into the mire of sin, you yourself divide them into virtuous and vicious, human beings and inhuman monsters; you yourself defile them with the venom of your possessedness; because you don't love human beings, but the human being. But I tell you, you have never seen a sinner, you have only - dreamed him."

I imagine what Stirner was writing against here was a certain sort of idealistic do gooder with imaginary spooks in their head ("love of humanity") rather than of love as a concrete property that can be actualised by real people in the world. (After all, he had a love of his own, one Marie Daehnhardt to whom *The Unique and Its Property* is dedicated, even though it turned out that she, by her own admission later to John Henry Mackay, didn't really love him back.) And the game is given away here in the penultimate sentence of that I have just quoted. One imagines the love of which Goldman speaks (who also warmly received the ideas of Stirner), and perhaps that of Malatesta too, was not of an abstract "love" for an abstract "humanity" but one for real people in their real lives. In pointing out

this distinction, Stirner in fact helps us on our way for love should always be dealing with real people rather than abstract phantoms or, worse, a general principle of humanity. No such thing exists. But real people do and that is to whom love must be directed and between whom it must be actualised and realised.

Gustav Landauer was a German anarchist-socialist at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. He was of somewhat conservative personal morality (valuing the family highly and often in the face of criticism for it by others who imagined different communal arrangements) but nevertheless spoke at length to the creation of prefigurative communities of those who lived in contradistinction to the ways of capitalism and political authoritarianism. We see some of this in this extract from his essay "Through Community to Separation" which speaks in favour of such prefigurative separatism in a way very much to do with something Landauer identifies as "love":

"There is yet another way to feel the infinite, the most splendid of them all. We are all familiar with it as long as we are not entirely corrupted by the decadence and egotistical superficiality of our distorted and arbitrary communities. I speak of love. Love is such a wonderful and universal feeling, a feeling that spins us round and elevates us to the stars, because it is a cord that connects our childhood with the universe. There lies a deeper meaning in the fact that the name for the experience of community, the feeling that connects us with humanity: love, human love, is the same name that we use for the love between the sexes that connects us with the following generations. Damn the soulless who do not shiver when they hear of love! Damn those for whom sexual satisfaction is nothing but a physical sensation! Love sets the world alight and sends sparks through our being. It is the deepest and most powerful way to understand the most precious that we have.

I have talked about the gap between us, the new human beings, and the masses, and about the necessity to separate ourselves from those united by the state. This might seem to contradict my belief that a love for humanity is part of our most genuine being. Let me explain: on the one hand, it seems clear that all contemporary human beings – the civilized as well as the others – are so closely related to us that it is difficult not to love them as we love anyone who is close to us. On the other hand, the relationship is as difficult as it often is with our closest relatives: they are very close to us in their being and their characteristics, and we do feel the bond of blood and we do love them – but we cannot live with them. Most of our contemporaries have deformed their humanity because of their statist and social lowliness and stupidity; they have also deformed their animalness with their hypocrisy, false morality, cowardice, and unnaturalness. Even during occasional hours of clarity or despair they cannot shed their masks. They have blocked their way to the universe; they have forgotten that they can turn themselves into Gods.

We want to be everything though: humans, animals, and Gods! We want to be heroes! So for the love of humanity that has lost its way, for the love of those who will come after us, for the love, finally, of the best in ourselves, we want to leave these people, we want our own company and our own lives! Away from the state, as far as we can get! Away from goods and commerce! Away from the philistines! Let us – us few who feel like heirs to the millennia, who feel simple and eternal, who are Gods – form a small community in joy and activity. Let us create ourselves as exemplary human beings. Let us express all our desires: the desire for quietism as well as activism; the desire for reflection as well as celebration; the desire for labor as well as relaxation. There is no other way for us!

This intimate belief is born from grief: we want to feel the highest joy of creation because we are desperate. Those who have already experienced it know that the only way to

awaken people is by religious genius, i.e., by the exemplary life of those who do everything to rise from the abyss. These individuals know that all these questions are serious existential questions. We who are few, we who are advanced – we need our pride! – cannot, and do not want to, wait any longer! So let us begin! Let us create our communal life, let us form centres of a new kind of being, let us free ourselves from the commonness of our contemporaries!"

Let us move a little closer to the present time with our examples now. In order to do so I will turn to volumes two and three of Robert Graham's *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas* to see if, or in what connection, love comes into the arguments and ideas of those contained within. These volumes cover the period from 1939 to the early 2000s. Here a first notable entry comes from the British writer, pacifist-anarchist and one time colleague of Emma Goldman, Ethel Mannin, who, as part of the conclusion to her book *Bread and Roses*, writes on the subject of progress being "the realisation of our Utopias" in the following way:

"The history of bloody revolution everywhere is the history of failure. Revolution there must be, the 'complete change, turning upside down, great reversal of conditions, fundamental reconstruction,' of the dictionary definition of the word, but people are not to be bludgeoned into it; only what is achieved through the great upsurge of the human spirit, out of the impassioned desire of the multitude, endures; what is imposed by force has no roots, and cannot last. There is no realization of Utopia without the change of values, and no change of values without change of heart-spiritual revolution. Utopia can be founded only on man's love for man; on love and cooperation; not on hate and the seizing of material power. When one section of the community triumphs over another it is only a matter of time before the section from whom power has been wrested reasserts itself - in the same way

that it is only a matter of time before a conquered nation rises once more to power, and to say that history repeats itself is only another way of saying that wars beget wars... The power of moral force has not yet been fully tried out, though in India one old, frail man [Gandhi] has demonstrated its potentialities - as the Early Christians demonstrated the potentialities of co-operative living according to the law of love."

Julian Beck was one of two founders of an experimental political theatre company in New York in 1947. Here writing an introduction for a play about a military prison during the Korean War, he makes a relevant comment about love:

"The work of any important playwright. Open at random. Ibsen, Marlowe, Strindberg, Cocteau. The language is always good, like light. Language is the key. It opens the doors that keep us locked in confining chambers, the Holy of Holies, the instrument of unification, communication, and from communication let us derive the word community. The community is love, impossible without it, and the syllogism affirms then that love, as we humans may supremely create it, rises and falls with language. Yes, the grunts of animals in the act of coitus - music for the ears of heaven. The proper sounds, the stresses, the silences, the grunts that rise from real feeling, satisfaction with food or with your body as I animally caress it; those sounds wrenched from my groin upward and out of the throat, they please you, because they are honest and near to God."

David Dellinger was an American activist who, in the piece the following is taken from, is writing about communalism (living in communes), the problems that may be encountered there, and the qualities necessary in those who do:

"the members must have a dominating vision of a new life and a thorough revulsion from the anti-social customs of present day society. To have the best chance of survival a new commune must be composed of persons who have the same type of disgust at the economic selfishness of society that the conscientious objector has concerning war and violence. They must have a vision of brotherly love in day to day economic and personal relationships similar to that of the historic pacifist in the area of international problems. Otherwise their devotion to community can be expected to be as temporary as the 'pacifism' of sentimental peace-lovers who abandon conscientious objection and war resistance when the 'enemy' commits some heinous atrocity or when pacifists are threatened with social ostracism, unemployment, or jail... What is essential is a feeling for the possibilities of human development - a dominating faith in freedom, love, mutual respect, social equality, and economic sharing as goals worth more than any of the temporary and partial bribes our present society can dangle in front of us... The 'commitment' I refer to involves commitment to a love-relationship of communal sharing among the members. But it includes more than that. It requires a transfer of values, a growth in social solidarity with all human beings, a liberation from dependence on the socially irresponsible and personally noxious titillations of our society."

I have discussed Peter Lamborn Wilson (Hakim Bey) many times before in several other books. It is worth reminding ourselves here, however, of something he has to say about his concept of the Temporary Autonomous Zone in a context of love:

"we can speak of a natural anthropology of the TAZ. The nuclear family is the base unit of consensus society, but not of the TAZ. ('Families!—how I hate them! the misers of love!'—Gide). The nuclear family, with its attendant 'oedipal miseries,' appears to have been a Neolithic invention, a response to the 'agricultural revolution' with its imposed scarcity and

its imposed hierarchy. The Paleolithic model is at once more primal and more radical: the band. The typical hunter/gatherer nomadic or semi-nomadic band consists of about 50 people. Within larger tribal societies the band-structure is fulfilled by clans within the tribe, or by sodalities such as initiatic or secret societies, hunt or war societies, gender societies, 'children's republics,' and so on. If the nuclear family is produced by scarcity (and results in miserliness), the band is produced by abundance—and results in prodigality. The family is closed, by genetics, by the male's possession of women and children, by the hierarchic totality of agricultural/industrial society. The band is open—not to everyone, of course, but to the affinity group, the initiates sworn to a bond of love. The band is not part of a larger hierarchy, but rather part of a horizontal pattern of custom, extended kinship, contract and alliance, spiritual affinities, etc. (American Indian society preserves certain aspects of this structure even now.)

In our own post-Spectacular Society of Simulation many forces are working—largely invisibly—to phase out the nuclear family and bring back the band. Breakdowns in the structure of Work resonate in the shattered 'stability' of the unit-home and unit-family. One's 'band' nowadays includes friends, ex-spouses and lovers, people met at different jobs and pow-wows, affinity groups, special interest networks, mail networks, etc. The nuclear family becomes more and more obviously a trap, a cultural sinkhole, a neurotic secret implosion of split atoms—and the obvious counter-strategy emerges spontaneously in the almost unconscious rediscovery of the more archaic and yet more post-industrial possibility of the band."

Ashanti Alston was a member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army. For this he spent many years of his life in US prisons. As part of a talk on "Black Anarchism" in the early part of this century he made the following remarks:

"As a Panther, and as someone who went underground as an urban guerrilla, I have put my life on the line. I have watched my comrades die and spent most of my adult life in prison. But I still believe that we can win. Struggle is very tough and when you cross that line, you risk going to jail, getting seriously hurt, killed, and watching your comrades getting seriously hurt and killed. That is not a pretty picture, but that is what happens when you fight an entrenched oppressor. We are struggling and will make it rough for them, but struggle is also going to be rough for us too.

This is why we have to find ways to love and support each other through tough times. It is more than just believing that we can win: we need to have structures in place that can carry us through when we feel like we cannot go another step. I think we can move again if we can figure out some of those things. This system has got to come down. It hurts us every day and we can't give up. We have to get there. We have to find new ways."

So far in this chapter all I have done is give a few examples of how various anarchist-relevant people (mostly) imagined love (as an aspect of social community) had a part to play in the anarchism they were propagating and so the societies and relationships they imagined in a better future. This could involve a general love for human beings (a matter of feeling and, as a consequence, action) and also specific beliefs about love more personally considered ("free love", family organisation, etc.). But we can do better than this and now, using literature, and specifically some of the literature of Alan Moore, I want to up the stakes. I begin here on familiar territory by going back to *V for Vendetta* (V4V) which I recently interacted with at length in my queer apocalypse in part two of my book, *Black Seeds*. In this case, I want to begin with the character Valerie, the occupant of Room 4 (that is, one imagines, Room IV) in the Larkhill Resettlement Camp, a woman apparently hunted down and imprisoned because she was a lesbian. In terms of the

amount of time Valerie is involved in the plot of V4V she seems not to be an important character. But this is misleading for it is my view that Valerie is, in fact, *the most important character in the entire story*, the one responsible for V becoming who he is and so for everything that happens in the story as a result of this protagonist. In fact, if Valerie had not been in Room IV and had not had the courage to do what she did then V might never even have existed. Let me explain.

V4V imagines that the fascist Norsefire rounded up various social undesirables (from their point of view) and imprisoned them in "resettlement camps". (It seems clear they were not simply for "resettlement", however, as the book gives evidence of experimentation upon their inmates and also their murder. We can easily guess at Moore's inspiration for these camps in the Germany of 1933-1945.) These "social undesirables" covered a number of categories and one of them was apparently sexual minorities. (We do not know exactly why V was imprisoned because the story does not tell us. Its not really that important.) As a result, one of the people rounded up and imprisoned was Valerie whom we learn was a lesbian from Nottingham who became an actress. Moore gives her a background, written out by Valerie herself in the camp on a piece of toilet paper with a pencil she had hidden "inside her" for the purpose of writing and which she had pushed through a hole in the wall to V, which I want to reproduce here:

"I was born in Nottingham in 1957, and it rained a lot. I passed my eleven plus [this is an old educational exam which existed in the past in the UK education system in order to channel brighter students into better schools] and went to girl's grammar. I wanted to be an actress. I met my first girlfriend at school. Her name was Sara, she was fourteen and I was fifteen but we were both in Miss Watson's class. Her wrists, her wrists were beautiful.

I sat in biology class, staring at the pickled rabbit fetus in the jar, listening while Mr Hird said it was an adolescent phase that people outgrew. Sara did. I didn't.

In 1976 I stopped pretending and took a girl called Christine home to meet my parents. A week later I moved to London, enrolling at drama college. My mother said I broke her heart. But it was my integrity that was important. Is that so selfish? It sells for so little, but its all we have left in this place. It is the very last inch of us. But within that inch we are free.

London: I was happy in London. In 1981 I played Dandini in Cinderella. My first Rep work. The world was strange and rustling and busy, with invisible crowds behind the hot lights and all that breathless glamour. It was exciting and it was lonely. At nights I'd go to Green MJ or one of the other clubs, but I was stand-offish and didn't mix easily. I saw a lot of the scene, but I never felt comfortable: there so many of them just wanted to be gay. It was their life, their ambition, all they talked about... and I wanted more than that.

Work improved. I got small film roles, then bigger ones. In 1986 I starred in 'The Salt Flats'. It pulled in the awards but not the crowds. I met Ruth while working on that. We loved each other. We lived together, and on Valentine's Day she sent me roses, and, oh God, we had so much. Those were the best three years of my life.

In 1988 there was the war... and after that there were no more roses. Not for anybody.

In 1992, after the takeover, they started rounding up the gays. They took Ruth while she was out looking for food. Why are they so frightened of us? They burned her with cigarette ends and made her give them my name. She signed a statement saying I'd seduced her. I

didn't blame her. God! I loved her! I didn't blame her. But she did. She killed herself in her cell. She couldn't live with betraying me, with giving up that last inch. Oh Ruth.

They came for me. They told me that all my films would be burned. They shaved off my hair. They held my head down a toilet bowl and told jokes about lesbians. They brought me here and gave me drugs. I can't feel my tongue anymore. I can't speak. The other gay woman here, Rita, died two weeks ago. I imagine I'll die quite soon. It's strange that my life should end in such a terrible place but for three years I had roses and apologised to nobody. I shall die here. Every inch of me shall perish... Except one.

An inch. It's small and it's fragile and it's the only thing in the world that's worth having. We must never lose it, or sell it, or give it away. We must never let them take it from us. I don't know who you are or whether you're a man or a woman. I may never see you. I will never hug you or cry with you or get drunk with you. But I love you. I hope that you escape this place. I hope that the world turns and that things get better, and that one day people have roses again. I wish I could kiss you. Valerie x."

In the plot of V4V, receiving this note from Valerie, which tells the story of her search for happiness in life in spite of her dismissal and rejection by societal actors and her eventual capture and imprisonment, leads to Evey, who imagines herself imprisoned due to V's subterfuge, finding her own resolve and a new direction and motivation for her life. She too finds "that last inch" and refuses to cooperate with her imagined captors. This leads to the reveal that her imprisonment has been a pretence carried out by V in order that Evey would come to a point of transformation in which she sees everything differently. It is a point, so V tells us, which he himself had reached in the room next to Valerie's in Larkhill when he had originally received Valerie's scribbled note (which was and is very

real) after she pushed it through the wall. Valerie's tale of rejection and persecution - interspersed with three years of blissful lesbian love - is what changed V and turned him into the motivated anarchist that appears in V4V. It is also, subsequently, that which motivated Evey to change and join him in that task. It is why V maintains that he loves Evey and acts from love in the things that he does, both to her and to others. The entire story here is, thus, motivated by oppressed love as part of a story in which actualised love opposes the physical force and coercion that motivates Norsefire and against which V, Valerie, and eventually Evey, fight.

V for Vendetta is "only" a fiction but it is significant that it was written in the 1980s when actual gay and lesbian love was itself genuinely oppressed, both culturally and politically. The UK Conservative government of the time (of which both Moore and artist David Lloyd would have been especially aware) engaged in anti-homosexual propaganda and lawmaking (against which Alan Moore himself was politically engaged with works such as *The Mirror of Love*). There were also campaigns, such as that led by Mary Whitehouse with her reactionary group the "National Viewers and Listeners Association", which decried any depiction of lesbians and gays in TV or on film. The newspapers of the time were virulently anti-gay in comment pieces and the tone of their journalism, and proactively outed and hounded gay and lesbian celebrities such as Freddie Mercury. It is consequently not at all insignificant that Alan Moore should make a lesbian character's love, and her societal persecution for it, the central and motivating factor of his tale (and one which often seems to go unnoticed by those more influenced by the intensely sub-par American film version of *V for Vendetta* than the book). It is also hardly irrelevant that, at the time, Moore himself was part of a love triangle in his own home in that he was married to a woman whilst also sharing another female lover with his then wife of the time who lived together with them. This story was then personal for Moore and not merely some fiction.

This, I hope, gives some sense of the importance and centrality of love to *V for Vendetta*. People persecuted for love? Love being proposed as that which is to counter physical force and violence as societal motivation? It has been pointed out before how, in *V4V*, the forces of Norsefire, as shown in and through the Norsefire characters portrayed, know only frustration in love and this is deliberate in terms of the story. Adam Susan's computer tells him "I love you" (V, it is revealed, has had access to this computer all along) and he reels back stunned, crying out. He later asks the computer if he is loved but the sense is one of frustration for he is not loved; he, like all of those working for or connected to Norsefire, are strangers to love and apparently incapable of it. They are portrayed as those inveigled in systems of force, violence and manipulation in a way which suggests some either/or. So, as beholden to force and coercion, they neither know love nor its unique motivations, rewards and pleasures. They simply want people to do as they are told, for things to be made to run a certain way, one in which they have not love but only a possibly fragile power. They do not know the motives and relations of love which V claims to be motivated by himself as he cultivates roses, a symbol of love because of their relation to love's happiness in the story, in memory of Valerie. The opposition here is, thus, very clear and very stark - love or violence, love or power, love or control, love or coercion.

And this is not the only place in Moore's fiction where this occurs for, if we turn to the later *Lost Girls*, we see it again. The story of *Lost Girls* takes place against the looming, patriarchal, deeply moralist and coercively violent, backdrop of the First World War. It is the transgressively pornographic story of three beloved characters from literature - Dorothy Gale (*The Wizard of Oz*), Alice Fairchild (*Alice in Wonderland*) and Wendy Darling (*Peter Pan*) - and their chance meeting at an Austrian hotel - the Hotel Himmelgarten (Hotel Heaven Garden) - and their subsequent rehabilitation of themselves from past lives

of sexual complication (if not to say violence and/or coercion) through repeated acts of consensual sexual love and sexual imagination in and through story. Hotel Himmelgarten, so it transpires, is run by a manager (Monsieur Rougeur) who has a mentality of free love of his own and so he has set up his hotel, an oasis from the world outside as the name suggests, with a mentality of open sexuality and the free sharing of love between consenting guests and staff in mind. Consequently, each room in the hotel is provided with literary pornography in the form of the "White Book" which includes lascivious and transgressive tales and erotic drawings which Moore (along with his wife and the artist for the book, Melinda Gebbie) has researched and taken/copied from erotic writers and artists of the age in which the story itself is set.

Lost Girls is a story told in three books of ten chapters each. The plot itself is not of direct concern here but the theme of violence versus love is. In short, each character is introduced with a sexual spin on what we know of these characters from their more conventional sources such that sex - and so love - becomes a coercively problematic subject in each of their lives which needs to be worked out in the story. Here the theme of violence versus love plays its part. The love, of course, is provided by these characters who engage in sex scene after sex scene throughout the book but always with an overt example of sexual imagination to accompany it. (Most usually this is one of these characters recounting an incident from their past whilst all engage in sexual play in differing contexts and surroundings.) In doing so, they "make love" whilst making use of sexual imagination and so reimagine who they are as people, recontextualising past experiences through the loving creation (physical and in the sexual imagination) of new ones. This is contrasted both with the violent and unpleasant sexuality (and so imagined lack of "love") encountered in their past (in this book Captain Hook is a public sexual predator of teens whom Wendy has to confront, for example, and Alice's rabbit is an

older family friend called Bunny who takes sexual advantage of her when she is home alone) but also that outside of Hotel Himmelgarten in the "ordinary world" where men, so it is imagined, organise their world by violence and coercion and seemingly prefer conflict to love.

This is demonstrated in the closing chapters of each of the three books. In chapter ten, "Stravinsky", the three women go to the opening performance of Stravinsky's ballet "The Rite of Spring" in Paris, a historical event from May 29th 1913 in which the crowd apparently rioted at what was presented to them in the reimagining of ancient Russian pagan rituals and a girl who dances herself to death as a sacrifice accompanied by avant-garde music, costumes and dancing. In Moore's retelling, however, whilst the crowd get angry and turn to violence, his three female protagonists engage in quite public and explicit sexual interactions in the stalls to which the rest of the audience seem oblivious. Chapter twenty, Snicker-Snack, is then the story of a debauched, sexuality-infused trip the three women, now well acquainted, take to an island on the Bodensee directly contrasted (each page is two split panels) with a depiction of the murder by an assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the proximate event which led to the First World War. Finally, chapter thirty, "The Mirror: Reprise and Crescendo (Who Dreamed It?)" depicts the women after their final night of love together in Hotel Himmelgarten (now abandoned), their departure, the hotel's invasion by soldiers and the bleak violence and death of the First World War in an anonymous field in which a young man lays dying and bleeding, a hole where his stomach used to be. The message could here not be clearer: we could all live in a Utopia of physical and sexually imaginative love but, instead, we go (either personally or collectively) to foreign fields to kill strangers, often dying in the process ourselves. Implicitly, the question is then asked: which would you rather be doing? Unfortunately, in

light of such a story needing to be written, it seems the answer is not as obvious as first thought.

In the context of an imaginary love paradise (which is what Hotel Himmelgarten is such that even very uptight and strait-laced characters get in on the loving action - the most obvious example being Wendy's imagined husband in the book, an older man estranged from physical love who, in the hotel, has gay penetrative sex with an Austrian soldier convalescing there whom he then gets into a fist fight with at the end after war has broken out) one sees the utopian aspect of Moore and Gebbie's vision. This is not merely a story: it is a manifesto. The authors are RECOMMENDING guilt-free consensual physical love and accompanying sexual imagination as better, as beneficial, for society - especially as contrasted with the violence, coercion and power-seeking which leads to exploitation, domination and war. On one level, then, the book really is as blunt as "make love not war" - and the authors are entirely serious about such a message.

To be serious about it, however, one requires a vision of love and Alan Moore gives ample evidence in his work of having such a thing. This is a vision which crosses all kinds of boundaries (marital, family or sexual preference ones being only the most trivial of examples) and is politically engaged and engaging as in the aforementioned *The Mirror of Love*, written as a protest against UK Conservative Party anti-gay legislation, or the later essay *25,000 Years of Erotic Freedom* which basically argues that the erotically free and engaged, the actively and openly loving, are the more creative, positive and beneficial members of society and, indeed, that societies made up of such people and relations are better societies, more positive and supportive societies, more creative societies, than those made up of the erotically frustrated, closed off or denied who we might imagine

instead as the loveless. In fact, when one looks at the broad sweep of Moore's work, such themes seem to be as a golden seam running right through it.

I do not have time or space to develop that particular line of thought, however, but I do have time to example Moore's vision of love. The source is a strange one but what Moore has to say about love in it seems so important that it must be grappled with. I am talking here about Moore's run on the horror comic *Swamp Thing* in the mid-1980s and particularly issue 34 of that run, "Rite of Spring" (yes, recalling exactly the same ballet-related subject matter he later uses again in *Lost Girls*), where there is depicted a loving and extremely psychedelic physical scene between the lead woman of the piece, Abby Cable, and the Swamp Thing itself when they realise and admit that they love each other. (Swamp Thing, at least as Moore recreated him at the beginning of his run writing the character in January 1984, is a conscious plant elemental and so not a human being at all, essentially making this an example of "loving the earth".)

Issue 34 begins with Abby Cable's husband in hospital and not expected to recover from injuries accrued by his recent possession by a villain of the comic, Arcane. (Arcane is actually Abby's uncle but the full ins and outs of the story need not concern us here.) Abby has been becoming estranged from her husband for many previous issues by the time we get to issue 34. Now faced with her estranged husband finally passing on, she goes to be with the Swamp Thing (whom she has previously had some affection for as, in the past, he was imagined, incorrectly, to be a human being called Alec Holland [Abby still refers to him as "Alec"] who, due to an explosion and a magic scientific formula, was believed, at first, to have been somehow turned into a plant) who literally lives in the Louisiana swamp and, as a character, is some form of "representative of the earth" yet

also a character (because a consciousness) of his own. As we see here in issue 34, he has feelings and thoughts of his own, as a result, too.

When Abby first meets the Swamp Thing in the swamp in this issue she is familiar, plucking a flower from his body mass for her hair. (Swamp Thing is a tangled mass of vegetation in anthropomorphic form, the result of the processes which created him.) That the events of the issue play out in spring is pertinent since the image is one of new life and fresh growth. Abby wants to talk to Swamp Thing and it is about her affections. There is some awkwardness as Abby stumbles her way to letting the Swamp Thing know that she has affections for him, affections, as it transpires, that are returned. Here, I want to take up the dialogue of the issue itself:

Abby: Oh hell. There's something wrong with me. I build things up in my mind. I read things into the way you look at me, kid myself that maybe you feel the same as I do. But you're a plant, for god's sake! Just saying it out loud, I mean, its just so funny. How could you love me?

Swamp Thing: Deeply... silently... and for too many years.

Abby: You... you never said.

Swamp Thing: No. I thought it would frighten you. Abby? What do we do now?

Abby: I've never kissed you.

Swamp Thing: It would be unpleasant for you. Abby, we are so different.

(They kiss and embrace.)

Abby: Oh. Its like lime but not as sharp.

Swamp Thing: Do you like lime?

Abby: Its my favourite. You want to walk for a while?

(They walk.)

Swamp Thing: Abby?

Abby: Yes?

Swamp Thing: You... are human. You need more from love than the taste of lime.

Abby: Ugh. You're talking about sex, right? Well, listen. I mean, I have, you know, thought about all that, but, I mean, I know that the physical side of things... I know that's not possible, but... Look, What I'm saying is that its not important to me. As long as all the other stuff is there, as long as you... well, want me, I guess, and sort of care about me...

Swamp Thing: But there should be some form of communion...

Abby: Yeah, yeah, I know, but it doesn't have to be physical.

Swamp Thing: No. Please wait here for a moment.

(Swamp Thing goes down into the water of the swamp and rips a part of himself that looks something like a yam out of his chest, washing it in the water. He then presents it to Abby.)

Abby: Ugh. What do you want me to... You mean I'm supposed to eat it?

Swamp Thing: Yes. Does the idea repel you?

Abby: No, not anymore. The first time I thought about somebody eating part of you, I... well I threw up. But if this is something that you want me to do...

Swamp Thing: It is.

(Abby takes a bite.)

Abby: Its great. Its like a sort of perfume taste, like cardamom. Mmm, this is really good. You wanted to do this as, like, a symbolic thing?

Swamp Thing: No, not entirely.

Abby: What do you mean? Is there something else I should have... ugh... Alec? Alec, everything looks sort of... strange.

Swamp Thing: How do you mean "strange"?

Abby: Oh. Look at the swamp. Its all of fire. Millions of birthday candles. And look at me! All these strands of pearly stuff. Alec, what's happened to everything?

Swamp Thing: You ate the fruit, Abby. You absorbed a little of my consciousness, my perceptions.

Abby: You mean... this is how you see things?

Swamp Thing: Not all of the time. Only when I wish to. Do you like it?

Abby: Oh, its... These strands, you're made of them too. Everything's made of them... silky, luminous cobwebs. And these little stars, these little jewels of light that drift about inside you. I don't have any of those.

Swamp Thing: No. Those are insects.

Abby: Everything's alive... and its all made from the same stuff. I never realised. I never realised that the world was like this.

Communion: Spring came and everything in the world woke up. My hand shatters the pool, a hundred glass beads exploding out between my fingers. A brief anti-gravity necklace settles against my throat, collapsing, dissolving, warm as it trickles away. Below the water, the sudden cold frottage of fish skin, slick and silver against my instep. It twists, flickers, disappears. The bubbles rise... The threadlights, a blazing cat's cradle inside me, inside him. Where we touch, the fibres merge and intertangle. I am no longer certain where I end... where he begins. I feel my own hand as he feels it, a warm bird caged within my strong green fingers, pulse hammering in its breast. We blur together, unresisting... the bubbles rise. A smear of platinum scales breaks the surface, rolling, resubmerging. There is a delicious ambiguity.

Looking up through his eyes: the pale woman gazes down, a burning flower adrift on the milk waterfall of her hair. Its lank tips draw clear sable brushstrokes between the lichens engraving my chest... She is so beautiful... I am so beautiful... A tide of emeralds engulfs me. I am falling into him. I don't care.

In him I ride the amber sap, oozing through miniature labyrinths. Clusters of insect eggs burn like nebulae, suspended in their unique and vine-wrought cosmos. Through him, I sprawl with the swamp, sopping, steaming, dragonflies stitching neon threads through the damp air surrounding me. Beyond him I wrestle the planet, sunk in loam to my elbows as it arches beneath me, tumbling endlessly through endless ink. The bark encrusts my flanks. The moss climbs my spine to embrace my shoulders. We are one creature and all that there is is in us.

Together we know the light, exploding upward in a birdcloud, fragmenting into whirring feathered shrapnel, dancers in the glare. But the light is not all that we know. Together we bathe in raw life: honey rolls across our tongue. The fragrance of decay, mesmeric and overwhelming, excites our nostrils. We savour both equally for life is not all that we comprehend. We are the world. Amid coiling, lightless mazes deep within us, rodents make love and wage vendettas, with needle teeth that tear and small hearts that spill poppies on black earth scented with urine. Tenderness. Passion. Violence. My enemy's blood erupts to fill my mouth with molten copper. I circle with the hawk moths at their conjugation, breathless at the alien desires abstracted in their dance. There is no contradiction... only the pulse. The pulse within the world. Within us. Within me.

It throbs, it breathes, in the world, in its fibres... The pulse quickens, strands tighten, drawn taut, a clenched glove in my stomach. Underground, buried claws wound the soil... savage

furrows fill with moisture... a fish twists... the bubbles rise... the world pulses... and shudders... with life... and death... with tide... and magma...

With me. With him.



(Swamp Thing and Abby Cable as drawn by Stephen Bissette and John Totleben)

The imagery of love, of lovers, here is quite striking and exceedingly intimate. Yet it is also unusual and even alien. It is fundamentally intersubjective and in a way that merges perhaps all subjects (or imagined subjects) into one (yet also not). I note first of all, then, that Swamp Thing points out Abby's seeming need - as a human being - for more than "a taste of lime". This emphasises the human being's need for physical intimacy when it comes to love. It is far from a matter of distance or separation. A human being, feeling love, wants to be physically close to the beloved, to touch them, to experience their own physicality and nearness. Love is nurtured and enhanced, fed, by proximity. Swamp Thing seems to be very aware of this fact and Abby, in her response, acknowledges its truth.

But there are obvious problems here for Abby and Swamp Thing are utterly different in physical terms. (Swamp Thing is not even an animal but a conglomeration of plants and even insects that find a home within his mass.) The solution Swamp Thing calls "communion", something which involves ingesting a presumably psychotropic component of his "body", allows Abby to experience reality in some way as he does. That is, he literally devises a way for Abby to physically and mentally share his reality. With the use of the term "communion" and the means of achieving it - ingesting of a host - there are obvious comparisons to religious symbolism to be had here. Specifically, the Christian ritual of "Holy Communion" is an act where the Christian believer ingests (either symbolically or actually depending on the Christian confession) the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This is similarly a ceremony significantly described in Christian literature as a matter of love, in that case in the form of a willing sacrifice which said ritual commemorates (the "rite of spring" in Stravinsky's ballet similarly references a willing sacrifice). One imagines this, too, is thought an intimate, rather than a trivial, interaction. More established churches in fact conduct education around this ritual and there is often a ceremony which prepares the believer to enter explicitly into the practice.

For Abby and Swamp Thing "communion" means coalescing together, merging, not merely with each other but seemingly also with all life in general in a way relevant to the Hermetic, alchemical and Gaian ideas I have referenced before. It is something which leads to a transformation of consciousness, an altering of reality. Here, as we have seen elsewhere, life seems to be a co-entailing, intimate, "loving", entangled phenomenon. Myths of total separation or pure subjectivity are utterly exposed under such thinking. The emphasis on the willingness of the participants here to allow themselves to be absorbed into the mass of life and love emphasises that they are not losing themselves by doing so but gaining something more, something of meaning, as if being part of a greater reality makes you even more yourself. In letting go, paradoxically, you also become. Moore skilfully uses language here to keep a balance between being a consciousness and aware of yourself but also being so much more than a consciousness by being intimate and intermingled with the consciousness of others. Moore can switch subjectivities mid-description such that it is now seemingly Abby speaking but then the Swamp Thing and suddenly now seemingly both together. The distinctions seem not always so relevant. What is more important is to participate and collaborate in the larger reality of which one, seeing differently and multiply and together, is now a part.

Love as communion is then not simply about communion with each other but communion with life itself in all its forms, life as an ecosystem, an intimate and constant relation, a participation in a much greater familiar and loving reality itself. Not merely Abby and Swamp Thing coalesce here but life and love do too. They are fully joined, inside each other physically and mentally, experiencing each other, but in a much more intimate way than more basic and vulgar (and less mutually implicating) descriptions might describe. And love, so Moore seems to say, is then precisely this, an intimacy of love, an intimacy of

life, an intimacy of physical and conscious experience, an intimacy of being and of feeling and of imagination: "a delicious ambiguity".

As it turns out, this idea is hardly restricted to fiction in a world in which "ecosexuality" exists. Ecosexuality, and so the sexual preference "ecosexual", is the postulation of the artist and academic Beth Stephens and her lover, the artist and former porn performer Annie Sprinkle. (Don't let "former porn performer" fool you. Annie also has a PhD.) Their book *Assuming the Ecosexual Position: The Earth as Lover*, from which I am now going to quote extensively, is the place where they describe what is now their over 20 year relationship with each other and with the earth, a relationship which has pulled other humans into the ecosexual position as well (not least in the shape of their many collaborators). Through art installations, theatre performance, walking tours, free street sex advice sessions, documentary film, political action, symposia and literature, Stephens and Sprinkle have essentially invented a sexuality and entirely recontextualised the way to see life on earth. According to the foreword of their book (labelled a "Foreplay") written by Una Chaudhuri, the authors' ecosexual project is about "bodied discovery" and an "alchemy" which produces far more than the sum of its parts. Fundamentally collaborative, it acts with the ethos of "collaboration-as-enjoyment" and invites everyone, whoever they are, to join in. Ecosexuality, as Chaudhuri reads it, is "a capacity of radical lovingness - a capacity anyone and everyone can manifest." This project does not lack ambition either for Chaudhuri suggests it is about nothing less than "transformation of the world". Thus:

"Seeking, making, and celebrating alliances with one after another of earth's elements, landscapes, geographies—the sea, the forest, ice, gold, coal, dirt—the Ecosexuals perform an ongoing revolution."

This, continues Chaudhuri, is a project which seeks to couple "ecology and enjoyment", something she imagines "the most radical thing one can do today" and is a matter of "ecospheric consciousness".

The Spanish writer, philosopher, art curator (and sometimes collaborator with Stephens and Sprinkle) Paul B. Preciado (who is a trans man) has compatible thoughts in his afterword to the text (which I shall come to in detail shortly). Preciado calls *Assuming the Ecosexual Position* a "love biography" and I very much agree. For, inasmuch as the book itself is largely a history of Stephens' and Sprinkle's relationship with each other and the earth, it is the story of their love and the path it has taken over two decades. Yet it is also what Preciado calls a "treatise" and elsewhere might be called a manifesto. Preciado, himself the author of *Counter-sexual Manifesto* which I referred to in my previous book, *Black Dog*, is not slow to see the political substance of ecosexuality in a world in which it might be laughed off as trivial, weird or hokey. Preciado sees the love involved in ecosexuality as "a project of collective transformation" and "eroticism understood as an anarcho-libertarian project". It is a "love relationship" become "collective movement" - and one which "transform[s] the spectator into a lover", which beckons one to "enter into a relationship of care and love" with Stephens and Sprinkle "and with all the other living beings on the planet, with the very totality of the planet as a living entity." Preciado credits the authors with inventing "a social architecture of cooperation and love alternative to traditional democratic political practice with its logic of representation and parties." He imagines that, as art, it is more powerful than politics and, as care, goes beyond the limitations of anger. He finishes his afterword by saying:

"Love is the central political concept of this ecosexual book. But not love the way it has been captured by the patriarchal-colonial language: not couple love, not family love, not love of

the nation, not love of purity, not love of property, but love as experimental collective practice extended to the totality of the planet."

So what is "ecosexuality"? What is an "ecosexual"? Well its all about love and love is a physical thing. Stephens and Sprinkle introduce their book like this:

"We are two ecosexual artists in love, in a relationship with each other as well as with the Sky, Sea, Appalachian Mountains, Lake Kallavesi in Finland, the soil in Austria, the Sun, the Moon, Coal, our late dog Bob and our current dog Butch, and other nonhuman and human entities. Our relationship with these ecological bodies is multigenerational. While we have been around only for a few decades, some of these entities are approximately four and a half billion years old. Our relationships with nature entities are simultaneously pure, sweet, and innocent, as well as complicated, messy, and taboo. Sometimes they are long distance, such as our love affair with the Moon. Sometimes they are very close, like when we walk barefoot in the grass or breathe the Sky deep inside our bodies.

What if we imagined the Earth as our lover instead of our mother? Or both? What if our bodies didn't stop at our skin but were much, much more expansive? What if we are the Earth, not separate? Since 2008, when we married the Earth, the two of us have been doing life and art experiments that explore these and other questions. This has been and continues to be an exciting expedition. Many people have joined us along the way. Our love for the Earth has also been rejected, misunderstood, and critiqued. Now, after many years of this ecosex adventure, we desire to share our stories, pollinate the results of our research, and proclaim our love for this magnificent home.

This is the story of how the two of us got together as a couple and became full-time, long-term collaborators, followed our muses, one experiment leading to the next until we fully embraced the ecosexual position. This book weaves together our experiences with field notes, ideas, discoveries, and various theories that we have created and explored. We begin by sharing a bit about ourselves, our backgrounds, and how we got together, became pollen-amorous, helped to grow the ecosex movement, and officially added the E for ecosexual to the LGBTQIA+E moniker. We'll share some real-life dramas, like when we were protested by anti-porn feminists, tagged by a neo-Nazi in a balaclava, and had a SWAT team surveil our wedding. We will describe how we turned our breast cancer treatments into romantic, sexy theater and performance. We will weave tales of our travels around the planet to present our work at various places, including sex toy shops, a laundromat, churches, and off-grid activist camps. We've also done work at some of the best museums, galleries, and art exhibitions in the world, including the Venice Biennale, documenta 14, and New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Our journey has included thousands of collaborators and supporters, and we could include only a sampling of their names in this book. If you worked with us and your name was left out, we apologize in advance. It doesn't mean we don't appreciate everything you did, because we do. Our websites have full detailed credits for all of our symposiums, performances, and events, and we intend to keep those websites functioning for years to come.

This book is an invitation to collaborate and a call to deepen our relationship with the Earth. It certainly has been an adventure for us to write. We hope that you enjoy it. Perhaps you may discover you are just a little bit or a whole helluva lot ecosexual. In any case, we

hope that one day our paths will cross with yours, and we can further discuss loving the Earth and cross-pollinate with you."

On beginning to use the language and terminology of "ecosex" the authors say this in their introduction:

"Nineteen years ago, we fell in love and immediately began making art projects together about our relationship, love, and pleasure. We could not have imagined that one day we would call ourselves ecosexuals and take the Earth as our lover, or that we would make work about environmental issues. Yet here we are, ecosexuals, following our muse, our desire, imaginations, and our conscience as we engage in the daily practices of living ecosexually. After we did a performance where we married the Earth, we started using the word ecosex, because it sounded like what we were doing. Then we adapted it to fit our needs. When we first used ecosex to describe what we were doing and ecosexual to describe our sexual identity and our work, we were being a little tongue in cheek. But then after a while we saw that there really was something to it. Suddenly things got serious. We started asking ourselves: What is ecosex? Who are the ecosexuals and what do they do exactly? Where did the concepts behind ecosexuality develop? How can ecosex art and activism help bring about much needed change? And what inspired us to assume the ecosexual position?"

A point to make here is that all I am going to be able to do in this moment is write about ecosexuality as Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle have invented (or discovered) it together. But ecosexuality, as a form of love, as a matter of love, is not primarily a theory or a discourse: it is both an action and a reality. It is something done, experienced, lived, something ontological. But what is that doing, experiencing and living about? The authors define "ecosexual" in the following ways:

"ecosexual... : eco from ancient Greek oikos; sexual from Latin, sexuales. 1. A person who finds nature romantic, sensual, erotic, or sexy, which can include humans or not. 2. A new sexual identity (self-identified). 3. A person who takes the Earth as their lover. 4. A term used in dating advertisements. 5. An environmental activist strategy. 6. A grassroots movement. 7. A person who has a more expanded concept of what sex and orgasm are beyond mainstream definitions. 8. A person who imagines sex as an ecology that extends beyond the physical body. 9. Other definitions as yet to be determined."

Writing personal notes about this after the definition, Beth Stephens refers to the background of both authors in "queer sex positivity" and "environmentalism" and a growing realisation "that ecosexuality could be an expanded experience of love and sensual pleasure." This reminds the reader of the book's opening questions: "What if our bodies didn't stop at our skin but were much, much more expansive? What if we are the Earth, not separate?" Stephens speaks of the authors' growing sense of:

"a more universal, enormous love for each other and for the Earth and even the cosmos. Engaging in an ecosexual vision of the world expanded our notion of sex and eroticism way beyond genital contact, beyond corporeal sex, and even beyond erotic energy exchange."

The point here is that this is not something sordid and silly, perhaps the egocentric and eccentric artistic expressions of a couple of California-based kooks. Say what else you like about ecosexuality, but its authors do not regard it as trivial or as a joke and they have expended decades worth of effort in activism for it. They take it all very seriously. They see it (from human point of view) as an expansion of love and an ongoing exploration of what it means to be a physical being in a living environment. They imagine to build "an ecology of relationships". They marry art, life, politics, love and the earth together until

they are one. (One imagines that in ecosexuality all relationships are poly with root systems constantly reaching out for new and other collaborations.) Sprinkle, a sex-positive feminist with an extensive personal history of sexual performance, both commercial and artistic (my favourite title of all the pieces of her work is "Public Cervix Announcement" which appears to be exactly what it sounds like), describes sex as "a way of embracing life and love", something "liberating, fun and creative. A great adventure" and this is the mentality with which Stephens and Sprinkle approach their ecosexual project in and through their lives and relationships which, expanded to planetary scale, are obviously numerous! Theoretically speaking, however, ecosexuality requires a manifesto, something which acts as the magnet pulling in like minds. The authors realised this and so came up with the following in 2011:

"ECOSEX MANIFESTO 1.0

(I) WE ARE THE ECOSEXUALS.

The Earth is our lover. We are madly, passionately, and fiercely in love, and we are grateful for this relationship each and every day. In order to create a more mutual and sustainable relationship with the Earth, we collaborate with nature. We treat the Earth with kindness, respect, and affection.

(II) WE MAKE LOVE WITH THE EARTH.

We are aquaphiles, terraphiles, pyrophiles, and aerophiles. We shamelessly hug trees, massage the Earth with our feet, and talk erotically to plants. We are skinny dippers, sun worshippers, and stargazers. We caress rocks, are pleased by waterfalls, and admire the Earth's curves often. We make love to the Earth through our senses. We celebrate our E-spots. We are very dirty.

(III) WE ARE A RAPIDLY GROWING GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF ECOSEXUALS.

This community includes artists, academics, sex workers, sexologists, healers, environmental activists, nature fetishists, gardeners, businesspeople, therapists, lawyers, peace activists, ecofeminists, scientists, educators, revolutionaries, critters, and other entities from diverse walks of life. Some of us are sexecologists, researching and exploring the places where sexology and ecology intersect in our culture. As consumers we aim to buy less. When we can, we buy green, organic, and local. Whether on farms, at sea, in the woods, or in small towns or large cities, we connect and empathize with nature.

(IV) WE ARE ECOSEX ACTIVISTS.

We will save the mountains, waters, and skies by any means necessary, especially through love, joy, and our powers of seduction. We will stop the rape, abuse, and the poisoning of the Earth. We do not condone the use of violence, although we recognize that some ecosexuals may choose to fight those most guilty of destroying the Earth with public disobedience and with anarchist and radical environmental activist strategies. We embrace the revolutionary tactics of art, music, poetry, humor, and sex. We work and play tirelessly for Earth justice and global peace. Bombs hurt.

(V) ECOSEXUAL IS AN IDENTITY.

For some of us, being ecosexual is our primary (sexual) identity, whereas for others it is not. Ecosexuals can be LGBTQIA+, heterosexual, asexual, and/or Other. We invite and encourage ecosexuals to come out. We are everywhere. We are polymorphous and pollen-amorous. We educate people about ecosex culture, community, and practices. We hold these truths to be self-evident: that we are all part of, not separate from, nature. Thus all sex is ecosex.

(VI) THE ECOSEX PLEDGE

I promise to love, honor, and cherish you, Earth, until death brings us closer together forever.

¡ VIVA LA ECOSEX REVOLUCIÓN !"

A second manifesto was also written later on:

"ECOSEXUAL MANIFESTO 2.0

We are Ecosexuals: the earth is our lover.

Fiercely in love, we are permanently grateful for this relationship. To create a more mutual and sustainable union with our lover, we collaborate with nature. We treat the earth with respect, affection and sensuality.

We are aquaphiles, terraphiles, pyrophiles, and aerophiles.

We are skinny-dippers, sun worshippers, and stargazers.

We are artists, sex workers, sexologists, academics, environmental and peace activists, feminists, eco-immigrants, putos y putas, trans/humanistas, nature fetishists, gender-bending gardeners, therapists, scientists and educators, revolutionaries, dandies, pollen-amorous cultural monsters with dogs and other entities from radical ecologies...

*Whether LGBTQI, hetero, sexual, or Other, our primary drive and identity is being Ecosexual!
Viva la ECOSEX REVOLUTION!"*

In part here, then, ecosexuality is ideological and visionary: it is an imagination of the earth and so of all the life upon it. Here "earth as lover" (and so life as lovers) takes pride of place - but not exclusively so. The authors say: "Our manifesto... boldly states that we see the Earth as our lover, that we love the Earth and find erotic potential in nature, and we are turning our love for the Earth into revolutionary actions." A more common view of Earth is "as mother" and, in this respect, it entangles feminist issues with ecological ones and becomes close to the ecofeminist movement which I interacted with in my "queer apocalypse" in *Black Seeds* when discussing *Mad Max*. Stephens and Sprinkle acknowledge this and work theoretically with the images of "mother" and "lover" in order to theorise meanings and consequences. Inasmuch as Earth is gendered in discourse, it is ripe for ideological and even visionary usages. On this Stephens and Sprinkle say:

"We wanted to go beyond the gender binary when it came to thinking about the Earth. As bad grrrl feminists, we were skeptical of binary constructions of the Earth as Mother/Other. As queers, we were eager to embrace the concept of the Earth as nonbinary or trans. Mothers (including Mother Earth) have not been treated terribly well in popular culture, which tends to construct the ideal mother as either asexual or heterosexual, self-sacrificing, white, and Christian. As feminists, we have a great deal of empathy and respect for the first generation of ecofeminists who promoted the idea of Earth as Mother to bring attention to the need for environmental activism. As queers and ecosexuals we wanted to expand the idea of environmentalism by combining it with the sex-positive feminism of the nineties, the cultural context from which our art careers were nourished. Today, as ageing women whose bodies are no longer taut, we want to acknowledge the materiality of nature, a materiality

that doesn't always conform to patriarchal anthropomorphizing fantasies of nubile, beautiful, fertile women or of dangerous vagina dentatas ready to do away with humanity at the drop of a hat. To counter these stereotypes, we adopted the metaphor of the lover instead."

In this regard, the authors quote ecofeminist Greta Gaard who has explored the connections between queer theory and ecofeminism. Gaard, for example, has written:

"A queer ecofeminist perspective would argue that liberating the erotic requires conceptualizing humans as equal participants in culture and in nature, able to explore the eroticism of reason and the unique rationality of the erotic."

Expanding upon this in terms of their own agenda, Stephens and Sprinkle say:

"To be someone's lover is more open-ended than being their mother. The lover assumes a relationship based on romance, sexual attraction, and sensual pleasure. The lover's relationship does not assume identities that conform to the gender binary and power dynamics of male and female. The category of the lover is more slippery than that of parent and avoids heteronormative family ideology. Our metaphorical and material shift to Earth as lover holds the potential to create relationships between humans and nonhumans that might lessen destructive and controlling practices such as taking resources (mining) or domesticating (damming rivers and streams). The lover archetype evokes pleasure or jouissance based on mutual needs and desires. Earth as lover has the potential to inspire humans to give as well as receive both love and support from the Earth."

Furthermore, the category of Mother represents an ideological construction that has been used to police the excess of pleasure and ecstasy, whereas the lover represents the promise of the as-yet-unknown. A lover is someone we want to get to know better, treat well, pamper, romance, and pleasure. Most to the point, if one does not treat a lover well, the lover can leave for someone else who will treat them better. While the Earth can't actually leave us, it can become so inhospitable that we have to live in radically different ways on it—or leave it."

It is as well to point out here what such an agenda has involved. First of all, before coming to specifics, we should note that the authors imagine that their love is joyful. Despite the fact that the Earth undergoes many trials today, it is not simply a constantly depressing matter of "woe is me" (and it never can be). They say:

"We love [the] idea of navigating times of struggle through art, dance, music, and sexy fun. We believe that pleasure activism can be a path that empowers many of us who are outside the mainstream to enact change. Just as violence is powerful, pleasure can be powerful, too. Perhaps even more."

This leads to a discussion of some of the activities our authors have designed and taken part in over two decades. These began when Stephens, then a post-graduate student, wanted to use a print Annie Sprinkle had made of her tits (Sprinkle was, by this time, a burgeoning avant-garde sexual artist after her porn career) in a show of queer visual art. This led to further work together as part of Stephens' studies and, finally, to their moving in together and becoming legal domestic partners several years later. This is important in this story because from it they learned that the ritual and ceremony of the wedding,

something they would later go on to perform several times over in many weddings with natural phenomena, can have a powerful effect. As Stephens says:

"This experience led us to recognize the power that large-scale ceremonies have to generate feelings of connectedness, not only between the parties directly involved but with communities at large. We realized how the wedding ritual could be used as a platform from which we could speak about political issues and transmit different kinds of messages regarding Love to our audiences. This was especially relevant because of the mystique of the wedding in just about every culture on Earth. We were surprised by how much the domestic partner ceremony meant to the participating queers and nonqueers alike."

Here the wedding stands as a symbol and ceremonial of love as a communal occasion in which such love can be expressed amongst all those gathered. Love is also expressly mentioned here as that which "can heal wounds". Such a realisation led Stephens and Sprinkle to inaugurate a seven year durational art project known as the "Love Art Lab" (Stephens was, by this time, an academic employed at the University of California Santa Cruz [along with colleague and project supporter, Donna Haraway] and so could incorporate this work into her academic career as research or work of academic value and purpose) in which each year was organised around a theme deriving from the philosophy of chakras with associated colours, areas of the body and so on. Each year incorporated a wedding, at least partly to publicly and politically propose love as the solution to imagined ecological and political problems. As their artist statement for the first of their seven weddings under the banner of the Love Art Lab project, the Red Wedding, maintains:

"Our seven years of love as art is intended to share our love with our friends, family, community, and beyond. Through generating and celebrating love we hope to bring about positive change."

One way they imagined to do this artistically was through the art performance "Cuddle". In basic form, this is simply Stephens and Sprinkle lying in a bed in an art space with members of the public invited, at their own discretion, to join them in the bed for a cuddle for a limited amount of time. (Initially this was seven minutes.) As they say about this performance in its initial incarnation:

"At the time, we had a rescued black Labrador retriever named Bob. Bob loved to cuddle between us in bed, and that made us so happy that we wanted to share this joy and experience with others. We installed a double bed, a sign-up sheet, instructions, and a timer in the middle of the space. In honor of the Red Year theme of security we made a bedspread with the word security printed on it, thereby creating a security blanket. Once each week we donned red fleece cuddle outfits that we had made special at Haight Ashbury's Piedmont Boutique and spent five hours cuddling gallery visitors, who were invited to remove their shoes and socks and snuggle between us under our security blanket. We then set the timer for seven minutes.

Sometimes the person wanted to talk, or spoon, or play footsies. Sometimes they simply wanted to be held in silence. All kinds of people would come for a cuddle—even some of Annie's old porn fans. We never turned anyone away. Bob would join in the puppy pile, unless the person didn't want him in bed. Bob loved it, and he may have had the most fun of all."

I see this, as they seem to as well, as activism for love and affection. It is not their only example of it either. Another example of this which they have engaged in over many years (with other collaborators) is Sidewalk Sex Clinics in which some "sex experts" will set up in a space, preferably in public and outdoors, in order to dispense free sex, love and relationship advice to whoever sits down and requests some. This furthers the agenda of wanting to create a safe, loving, erotically involved community in general and, in doing so, has a political point as well. In discussing the time during this period when Annie Sprinkle was diagnosed with breast cancer, they detail how they turned this into art as well and they say that "we wanted our sexuality and love for each other to remain front and center." This, indeed, seems to be the point of their art and activism from the beginning of their relationship and, in and through it, they focus all of their activities, the whole of life, through the lens of love. A further good example of their activism for love and affection is then their art piece "Extreme Kiss" which, in the first instance, was a three hour kiss Stephens and Sprinkle performed at an art show curated by the activist and porn performer, Madison Young (about whom I spoke at the beginning of my previous book, *Black Dog*). It was performed on other occasions with variations built in. For example, on one occasion it was a naked kiss of one hour length set in the middle of a gallery where visitors had to look at their bodies kissing in order to look around the room. On a further occasion, in London in 2007 at an arranged "Extreme Kissing Workshop", it was a group event where people could either come with a kissing partner or take the chance of being paired up with a stranger (which some were). It was advertised like this:

"Stephens and Sprinkle will lead this unique workshop exploring kissing as conversation, as political intervention, as altered state, as erotic meditation, and as performance art. Bring a buddy to kiss for two hours straight—a friend, lover, or any willing collaborator. Or come solo and take a chance that you will find a kiss collaborator at the workshop, or even out on

King's Road. The first hour of the workshop will be in the Chelsea Theatre where you'll receive instruction, and we'll set intentions. Then Stephens, Sprinkle, and all participants will emerge onto King's Road for a two-hour-long public Kiss-in. The last hour of the workshop will be back at the theater for feedback and a closing. Extreme kissing can make you highly euphoric, so don't plan to drive right after the kiss."

Now, as it turned out, this event did not go as planned since when the group of what was eventually thirty people emerged into the street to begin a two hour mass kiss... people violently complained! It would seem that love and affection shown by fully clothed people in a public space in a totally non-lewd manner was found offensive by at least some people! Stephens and Sprinkle remark that the agitated complainants seemed to have found the kissing "threatening". As a result, they eventually continued their kissing in the theatre - but there was a surprise pay off most relevant to times like our own in 2025:

"After the workshop ended, we discovered that two of the singles who paired up at the beginning of the workshop were an Israeli woman and a Palestinian man. They had a great time kissing for the full two hours and didn't discover each other's nationality until after the workshop ended. Even though their countries were in conflict, they both demonstrated and experienced how an act as simple as kissing can bridge the distance between two people who stand on opposite sides in a long-running dispute. Kissing can be political! Could extreme kissing help create peace?"

Activities such as those mentioned above are, as Stephens and Sprinkle maintain in their book, the promotion of love. So it is highly appropriate that in 2008 one of their wedding events was "to the earth" as explained in their following "artist statement" about it:

"GREEN WEDDING TO THE EARTH ARTIST STATEMENT

On May 17, 2008, we will take vows to love, honor, and cherish the Earth, in our fourth wedding. We invite you to take vows with us.

Why vows to the earth, and why now? People often think of the Earth as Mother Earth. But these days the Earth is so battered, abused, exploited, polluted, blown up, and ripped apart that she can't handle the burden of being a full-time Mother anymore. Perhaps it would be better to imagine the Earth as a lover, because we tend to take care of our lovers instead of expecting them to take care of us. It's a more mutual and sustainable relationship. Mother Earth is probably in menopause and very tired.

The earth is our lover! With her abundant sensual delights, breathtaking beauty, her delicious scents, tastes, and occasional temper tantrums. She's magical, mysterious, curvaceous, exciting, and unpredictable. We love to nestle in her woods, walk barefoot on her skin, circulate erotic energy with her, and float in her luscious waters. She's a fantastic lover, and we simply can't live without her. It's painful to watch her suffer—to witness the unbelievable pollution of her oceans, her mountaintops brutally sliced off, deadly chemicals thrown at her, piles of electronic waste dumped all over her, her premature global warming, the pollution of her air, the holocaust of her trees . . . need we go on?

We are inspired by people that we know who are actively loving the earth, such as the pioneers of environmental art Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison. We are honored that they will do our wedding homily. We are inspired by the work of artist and activist Guillermo Gómez-Peña, who will be so generous as to facilitate our vows. Ecoeducators Julia Butterfly

Hill, Kutira Décosterd, bell hooks, and Kaytea Petro are all teaching us new ways to love our Earth.

So we will enter into a deeper, more committed relationship with our Earth. We will vow to make more of an effort to be biodegradable, sustainable, to spend more time cleaning the beach, drive less, walk more, and we will install a greywater system in our house. We will vow to help make the environmental movement more fun and sexy. You're invited."

All this could sound terribly twee, "new age", self-indulgent and ultimately impotent. I am certain some hearing about these things would say so. But such criticisms, in a way, get exactly to the heart of the issues Stephens and Sprinkle raise in and through their love activism (which this brief discussion has barely scratched the surface of. Read their book and watch their films for the fuller story). For example, in their documentary film *Goodbye Gauley Mountain: An Ecosensual Love Story* Stephens and Sprinkle can be found hugging trees and fondling fruit and bathing naked in wild rivers. Sounds relatively easy to dismiss, right? But this film is also about the regular commercial practice of simply blowing up mountains (and anything on, in or around them) to pilfer their mineral resources for vast profit and at huge environmental cost to natural ecosystems (which are poisoned and destroyed by this activity). Do you think that is so easy to brush off?

Here the love activism meets the political reality of an abusive and exploitative system of political and economic relations that is about anything but love and affection. AND THAT, LOVE OR VIOLENCE, IN THE END, IS THE POINT. That is why Stephens and Sprinkle marry the earth and the sea and the Appalachian mountains where Stephens grew up and they made this film. In that it joins up with the political commentary Alan Moore gives in and through the character Swamp Thing who, in some respects, becomes "the green" as a

warrior in defence of itself. Stephens and Sprinkle, in their book, tell us that we too are the earth. And so shouldn't we seek to defend ourselves, defend our home, without which we are all dead? Isn't love a better overriding ethos for life, and for a planet that lives, than exploitation? (Love, that is, that, during their silver wedding to the rocks, was described as "companionship, reunion, making the way together, sharing our bread and our fluids, respecting and sexing, sexing up everything we touch.")

Simple, symbolic actions, done together, can have profound effects. Why do you think students and teachers in schools in some countries are required to stand before a flag and sing the national anthem at the start of every day? Why do you think in some places it is *de rigueur* to show some form of fealty to a passing monarch? What Stephens and Sprinkle teach, however, is communal love of the earth - and human beings as part of that earth which is to be loved. For example, of an occasion on the coast of Catalonia during which they participated in an Ecosex Workshop during which various performance offerings were shared with the group who were present, they say:

"The highlight of the day for us was when we all got down into doggy position, butts facing out to sea. Waves rolled in at just the right height to slap our asses and toss us like pebbles on the beach. This stirred our ecosexual brains, bodies, and libidos! We became pebbles! We squealed with delight, laughing hysterically.

There was no human-centric genital focus or contact during the whole workshop. We explored deep play in ways that felt new, innocent, and childlike. Experiencing ecosensual performances in a community of like-minded, adventurous people was surprising in that it brought us to a new kind of ecstasy. The love we generated together with and for the Earth was profound."

Of course, you can't make any money out of a group of people on the beach having fun together at the sea hitting their collective arses. There is no profit to be made in feeling one with the earth and no monetary payoff from extending the understanding of love. But is life in this new, planetary, even cosmological, sense about financial profit? Or would it be better off if it was about an all-encompassing form of experiential love, something that offers its own, very different, very transformative, rewards?

"Cuddling Athens

They say: close the borders.

We say: cuddle.

They say: build a wall.

We say: cuddle.

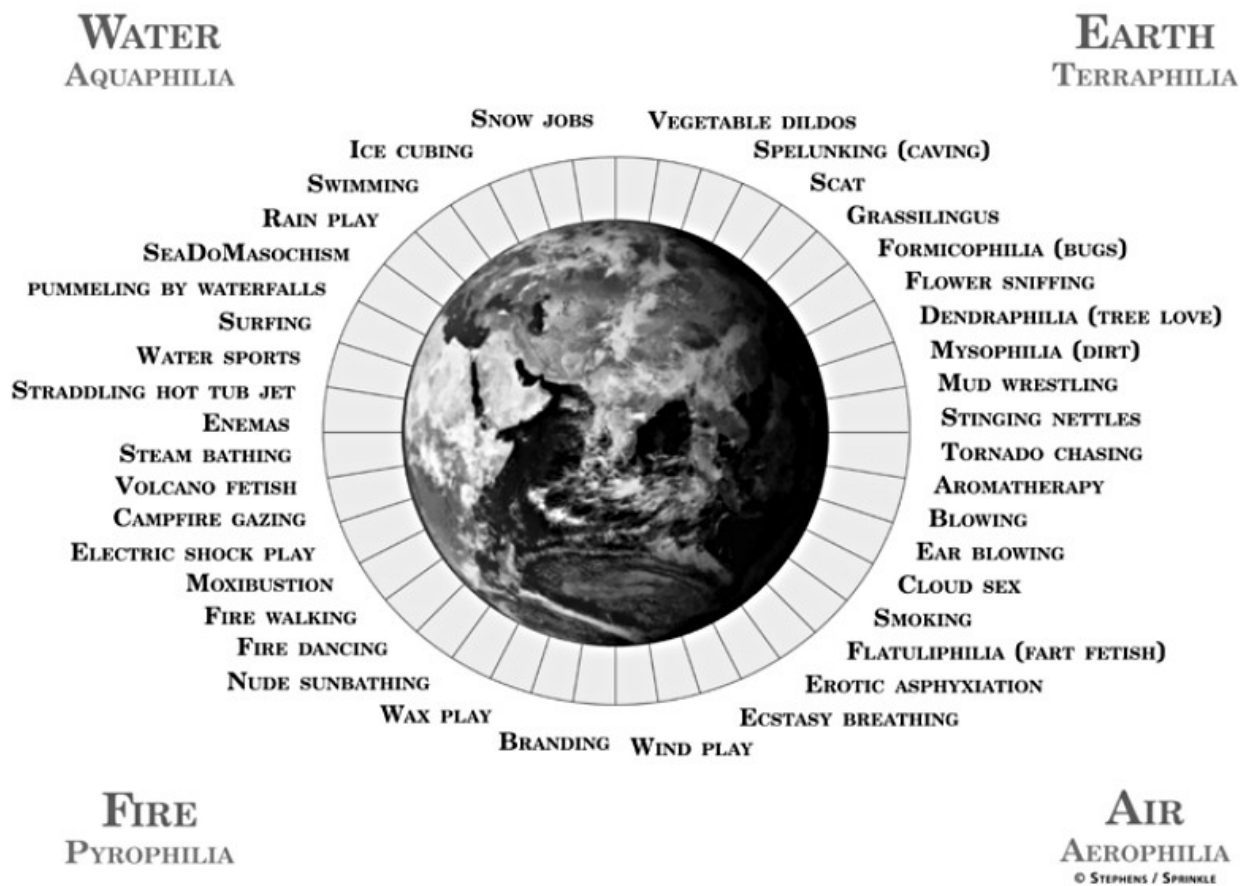
They say: fear the foreigner, watch the stranger.

They say: praise the individual, compete, win.

We say: cuddle.

Artists Annie Sprinkle & Beth Stephens have installed a bed within the museum lobby where they propose to cuddle every visitor who would like to participate for seven minutes. An active answer to the increasingly aggressive political measures taken globally against the survival of vulnerable bodies, the piece questions also the relationship between labor and sex, interrogating the exclusion of certain gestures and affects within the neoliberal regime." (Performed by Stephens and Sprinkle at the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, Greece, April 8–10, 2017. This curatorial statement was written by the curator, Paul B. Preciado.)

Loving is acting or, as The Human League might have put it, Love is "Love Action". In an effort to educate, Stephens and Sprinkle come up with an appropriately alchemical-adjacent diagram which lists just some of the ecosexual possibilities of earth, air, fire and water:



As sexecologists, we explore the places where sexology and ecology intersect in our culture. As part of our Dirty Sexecology performance, we presented this chart to help illustrate the range of ecosexual fetishes. Graphic design by Virginie Corominas. Authors' collection.

Love and materiality. Love and the elements. Love and the environment. Love with each other. Why can existence not be about love (as, I seem to recall, it actually is in the film *The Fifth Element*)? And so, to excerpt some concluding remarks from Stephens and Sprinkle in their book about both their projects and their ethos:

"Developing ecosex theories and practices has led us to ask questions about where the body begins and ends... As one can gather from the history of sex and pornography, definitions and attitudes toward sex and gender change from century to century, decade to decade, and year to year. As sexologists, sex educators, and artists, we like to envision future possibilities and new styles of sexual pleasure. Our work offers people an opportunity to expand their minds and create room for more sensual pleasure, experimentation, and satisfaction. With ecosex, we are in part trying to move toward an increasingly experiential way of being in our multidimensional bodies. This is in direct opposition to thinking of bodies as merely physical instruments meant to reproduce or provide labor for a handful of billionaires, their corporations, and their stockholders—bodies that go to work, return home, and consume products. It's about coming together, finding our shared humanity when power brokers and money grubbers try to divide us. Ecosexuality is a liberatory way of thinking about and being in one's body. It is, as Michel Foucault would have said, an ars erotica, or erotic art, rather than a science of sexuality..."

We imagine how to have sex in ways that put our internal bodily systems into play with our external ecological environments. Ecosystems are unfixed; they move and change. Physical systems are interconnected; that's how they thrive. When people think of themselves as independent, autonomous beings, exclusive and fixed, they become rigid. Ecosexuality is an extremely fluid sexuality. When you are an ecosexual, you always have a potential lover, or many, such as the Earth, Sky, and Sea. This is especially relevant during times when people have to be alone or are social distancing from others..."

We find it remarkable that killing a tree, or whole forests, is considered fine and normal, but loving a tree and trying to defend a forest are considered abnormal and perverse..."

While we love to think about ecosex, it is more important to experience it in our bodies, share it with other bodies, take it in with our senses, and enjoy life while we are alive, when we have that luxury...

...to make humans fall in love again with the Earth."

There is one recognised historical anarchist who I have been a reader of for some years who did fashion his own anarchy explicitly out of love (he called it "amorous camaraderie") and his name was Émile Armand. I have discussed Armand and his anarchy many times before. Yet I make no apology for doing so again for I am COMPLETELY CONVINCED that he (together with, but separately from, Emma Goldman) have a point. That point is: THERE IS NO ANARCHY WITHOUT FREEING LOVE AND FREEING LOVE IS NECESSARY TO ANARCHY. It might even be the only genuinely workable basis for it given the place and importance of love in life. This is both to contradict old Kropotkin, with whom Goldman argued about free love in his own Bromley house, and all those modern commentators who relegate Armand to a peripheral, almost unknown and certainly insignificant, role in anarchist history. Au contraire, mes amis, Armand had hit the nail square on its big, overflowing purple head. FREEING LOVE IS THE REAL ISSUE.

As already indicated, in my previous anarchist writing I have discussed Armand several times before (not least in the case of America Scarfo's appeal to Armand over her love which I discussed in *Black Flag*). But there is an aspect of his thinking I have not discussed before which becomes relevant in my context here. This is his idea that love, physically expressed, should be normatively regarded as a social resource amongst like-minded associates rather than as something individually and romantically articulated in normally coupled scenarios and perhaps organised socially according to standardised institutions

and relationships (the Western marriage and nuclear family). In this, Armand becomes somewhat like the indigenous communities I discussed in *Black Dog* in anthropological context for whom sex was not a coupled, implicitly family-building phenomenon but a social lubricant divorced from coupling or offspring and family life. As a result, I want to discuss this a bit more and by bringing Gaetano Manfredonia and Francis Ronsin's essay "E. Armand and 'la camaraderie amoureuse': Revolutionary sexualism and the struggle against jealousy" into the discussion.

The essay of these two French-based academics is written in the context of "free love and the labour movement" which has a socialist context Armand himself may not have appreciated (as an individualist anarchist) but the essay is of some worth. It focuses on Armand's developing views on sexual love and relationships particularly after he restarted the anarchist journal *L'En-Dehors* (The Outside) in 1922. Armand himself was a twice married man (the second time, in 1911, to a wealthy woman which allowed him free reign to become a writer and publisher without need to worry) who had begun writing about sexuality as early as 1907 (when he was 35) with some, at that time, vague thoughts about "free love" (an anarchist *cause celebre* for some anarchists but an irrelevant side issue for others) and some words in favour of multiple partners or "plural love" as he then called it. There was nothing especially remarkable about anything he was saying at this time compared to what others, such as Emma Goldman, had been saying for years.

From the 1920s onwards, however, Armand begins to think of sexuality in "revolutionary" terms. Manfredonia and Ronsin take up the story:

"In the letters from readers (of L'En-Dehors) that he published and in his responses to them, Armand shared increasingly radical theses on sexuality. The debate arose from a letter

signed "Raphaële" that he printed in February 1924. The woman writing this letter echoed the habitual view of free love by stating that she found "making love without being in love" impossible, as doing so would be tantamount to "prostituting" herself. Armand seized this opportunity to outline his theses supporting revolutionary sexuality and camaraderie amoureuse that differed from the traditional views of the partisans of free love in several respects. Armand submitted that from an individualist perspective nothing was reprehensible about making "love," even if one did not have very strong feelings for one's partner. Camarades such as Raphaële were wrong to attribute excessive importance to various erotico-sexual manifestations. Biologically, after all, these acts were "entirely healthy and normal." They were therefore not to be regarded as an "exceptional or extraordinary action." Moreover, he urged "our female congeners" not to exaggerate the value they associated with "granting their favours." In particular, Armand failed to understand why a young girl with modern ideas would refuse on principle – invoking a petit-bourgeois view of sexual relations – to share the joys of love with un camarade that she merely respected or liked. Agreeing out of camaraderie to satisfy the sexual desires of others with the same ideological views seemed to him no more dishonourable than accepting an appointment as a state official. Armand continued that if he were a woman, he would feel "tremendous inner joy" if he "believed" he were "the object of desire to share amorous delights" with a friend who was "not entirely repugnant" and with whom he "sensed a common mood and spirit." The debate on camaraderie amoureuse had begun."

It is important to grasp right away what is being suggested here by Armand so that we do not get things twisted from the off. Armand's view appears to be that men and women should regard physical love as an aspect of regular relationship RATHER THAN as something done by people in a special, and in some sense different and possibly exclusive, relationship. This fact is brought out in polemic, at the same time, with another

French anarchist, Han Ryner, where he articulates the view that his opinion is as it is in order to "tear down the impenetrable partition, which, even in surroundings such as ours (i.e. anarchist ones), distinguishes amorous expressions from other manifestations of camaraderie." Such a comment warns us that Armand was moving in territory unfamiliar, and perhaps even dubious, to other, more bourgeois, anarchists. Armand made no differentiation, seemingly, between comrades of both sexes, who could have fun playing board games or eating a meal and by engaging in mutual sexual enjoyment. In fact, an anecdote the French authors of the essay I am discussing relay confirms this when someone who knew Armand suggests that it was his habit to refuse dinner invitations with the reply, "If I share your bread and your wine, I must share your bed as well!" Readers should not take this to mean that Armand was a licentious beast but that he had rewritten the sexual ethics of love and friendship in his own imagination.

Armand, in fact, seems not to have understood why people treated sex differently to other aspects of social relationship when, in his mind, it was merely another resource or kind of interaction available for mutual good. He noted with surprise, for example, that some comrades tried to differentiate between "having fun" in intellectual or economic endeavours and "having fun" with sex. As Manfredonia and Ronsin report him saying:

"I have often asked comrades who had invited friends that they knew to be 'sensual' [...] why they had not tried to find them a delight that matched their amorous disposition. I never received a satisfactory answer."

Armand then comes to regard relationships that hive off sexuality, in a completely unjustified and bourgeois way determined by socially arbitrary understandings of sexuality, as if it were something completely different and of a different order or kind, as

“a limited camaraderie, an incomplete hospitality” and says that he is “wanting no part of a welcome that [makes] me feel comfortable in all respects except sexually.” As with the ecosexuals I discussed in the previous section of this book, Armand seems perfectly serious about this. He is thinking about things in a different way to his society and, in his mind at least, in a better and more beneficial way all round.

Yet none of this, of course, is anything to do with convincing or coercing people to act against their will. As discussed elsewhere, Armand sees himself as something of a sexual educationalist and argues that sexual ethics must be taught and learned like any other. The ideal, such as there is one, is voluntary acts of love, people who have reformed or actualised themselves to the extent that they see love for themselves as a social resource that it is useful, as an aspect of mutuality, to engage in multiply or plurally (one imagines either concurrently or sequentially). The ideal, Armand's own ethic of anarchist love, is then a community of people, a concatenation of relationships, facilitated in and through voluntary acts of physical love as a matter of uncontroversial normality. Yet *camaraderie amoureuse* always remains “an act of free will” and is so by definition. We might translate that phrase “loving fellowship”, by the way, in order to articulate Armand's sense of it as a consistent means of relationship among multiple people, perhaps in some intentional community or voluntary association. (Armand himself tried to start a few of these for the purposes set out but numbers were small and he failed to attract any significant number of women entirely.) Armand's view is, thus, that no “healthy, normal” adult really has reason to refuse such a relational understanding, that there is no real legitimate reason (outside the dictates of one's bad bourgeois education in society) to do so, and that the pleasure derived from it is mutually beneficial in any case - just like most other activities carried out socially with one's comrades and associates (about which they would usually have no complaint at all).

In this, Armand seems to have thought that he was just being consistent with anarchy rather than bending anarchy, in the matter of love, to more mainstream, liberal, bourgeois standards. This, in fact, is often the case and people in general (at least in the West) seem to treat love and sex as if it were wholly other in regard to almost any other subject. Nothing, as Emma Goldman said of her own history of public speaking, seems to upset and outrage people more than the amorous. Whole politics, in fact, seem orchestrated around the control of it - as we are seeing unfold, yet again, in the modern United States where a religious and puritanical ideology has always existed, coming over, as it did, from the Europe of 400 years ago. Armand's novelty, in this respect, is to try and use the proto-anarchist, associationist and contractualist notions of Charles Fourier and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon to regulate love on a more "free will" basis which resulted in social benefits as well as personal ones. As Manfredonia and Ronsin report this:

"Armand aimed to show that camaraderie amoureuse was simply the implementation in the specific area of sexual-affective relations of the contractual and associationist ideas he had elaborated in 1923 in his principal theoretical text 'L'Initiation individualiste anarchiste'. He envisaged camaraderie amoureuse in the same context as other types of camaraderie between anarchist individualists: a voluntary association in which the constituents have agreed tacitly "to spare each other any avoidable suffering." In keeping with his theses on the practice of providing guarantees, this interpretation of camaraderie amoureuse is an additional means for individualists, subject to constant "worries, (...) abuses, (...) assaults, and (...) persecutions from the 'archists' (who, as everybody knows, are the opposite of the anarchists), to protect, aid, and comfort each other.

"The camaraderie amoureuse thesis," he explained, "entails a free contract of association (that may be annulled without notice, following prior agreement) reached between

anarchist individualists of different genders, adhering to the necessary standards of sexual hygiene, with a view toward protecting the other parties to the contract from certain risks of the amorous experience, such as rejection, rupture, exclusivism, possessiveness, unicity, coquetry, whims, indifference, flirtatiousness, disregard for others, and prostitution."

Armand's intentions are clearly noble and virtuous and aimed at creating both loving communities and relationships. But one may critique the "contractual" basis of this whilst recognising the good in the general idea. One, it seems to me, cannot make a contract about love - whether that is a marriage contract or Armand's more avant-garde sex contracts. One has to leave people to their freedoms which may come and go as they will (the pirate example). One has to trust to the ethics of mutuality and reciprocity which anarchists have otherwise well established politically and economically. One may well recognise Charles Fourier's belief in a "universal right to enjoyment" (and so to pleasure) but it is a matter of anarchy to allow the details of that to be worked out in real time by actual people in and through the moments, and moods, of their lives. That is the ethos of agency, autonomy and voluntary association. Armand (who, to be honest, was hardly handsome - but then neither am I) is concerned that only the apparently "sexy" people would benefit from this revolutionary understanding of love and is concerned that it become a general ethos. But that can only occur by leaving people free to choose it for themselves. The gerrymandering of society is not the anarchist way and it can never be the anarchist way lest anarchy lose what makes it anarchy. Armand sees in his thesis, which he sometimes calls "sexual amoralism", as an opponent of the currently normative sexual moralism, a means to overcoming several social ills. He writes:

"sexual amoralism destroys in human unity values of servitude, such as vice, virtue, purity, chastity, reserve, caution, fidelity, and many other attributes that necessitate the state or

the church as guardians or teachers of morals. Wherever amorality figures in sexual relations, people who uphold moral traditions and good values are no longer required. That is what makes the sexuality we propagate revolutionary... As individualists, we should explore a conception of inter-sexual relations that makes us more anarchist, more 'neither gods nor masters,' more ex-morality, more ex-legality, more ex-sociability – but also more sociable when we form associations."

Armand combines these theses he is positively supporting himself with regular attacks on the traditional family as a malign, controlling and destructive institution (no complaints from me here) and the socially prevalent sexual prejudices (such as permanent, single and heterosexual partners FOR LIFE) which he sees as socially dangerous and which even otherwise avowed "libertarians" sometimes share. In this, most of all, he insisted on anarchist consistency, something often wholly lacking in matters of love - as the cases of America Scarfo and Becky Edelsohn (which I discussed in *Black Dog* and which, in both cases, involve teen girls willingly engaging with older men without any evidenced displeasure or negative consequence) have shown before. Even in more recent books I have mentioned attempts to smear an otherwise seemingly passive and benign anarchist, the bookish Hakim Bey, when he even so much as strayed near ideas of taboo sexuality.

Armand, who has been so totally marginalised by modern authoritarian "anarchists" that he is largely unknown (like Scarfo and Edelsohn, in fact), did much more than that, however. Armand actively argued, without shame, that people with taboo sexual interests should be actively allowed to seek out compatible partners for their taboo activities (which, arbitrary morality aside, are "beyond good and evil") so that every genuine and apparent passion may be satiated without moral or ethical disturbance. This, he imagined, is the anarchist way of responsible liberty as opposed to the way of general moral rules,

arbitrary, authoritarian policing of sexual behaviour and intrusive morality which imposes upon the autonomy of others in their free associations. His is not a sexual ethic which would be well suited to police and the sexual police would hate his ethic of mutually satisfying sexual freedom. Armand, in fact, argues, that people should actively form voluntary associations, groups of people who may practice amorous camaraderie to their mutual benefit in a way that is nothing to do with those outside. These, in Armand's anarchist reasoning, might even be incestuous groups since, if people freely choose their sexual engagements for reasons of mutual pleasure, then moral rules must bow to this greater rule. Mutually actualised pleasure production is its own law.

Armand's sexual thesis here is in the service of his egoist theory of anarchy which is that there is no "revolution" to wait for save the one we make right now, in and through our own lives, for ourselves. His amorous camaraderie was an aspect of this very revolution and so a demonstration that, to change the world, we must fundamentally change the way we relate. In that, he has been of fundamental importance to my own anarchist self-actualisation. Quite frankly, in a post-Armand world, it seems obvious to me that if we want to change this world of exploitation then we must change from relations of domination, coercion and control to relations of activated and actualised love. In this, I side with Armand and Goldman and think that this is a vital issue, and not with Kropotkin, who did not. A prudish society is a controlled and exploited society. A voluntarily promiscuous one would not be. A freedom that is personal and political must, as of first importance, also be a freedom in love. "Promiscuity in all things" is the anarchist's creed in my opinion. But nowhere is this more important than in love. As Armand himself in fact elsewhere writes:

"it is insane to try to reduce love to an equation or to limit it to one form of expression. Those who attempt this will find right away that they've been walking the wrong road. The amorous experience knows no borders, no limits. It varies from individual to individual."

The anarchist thesis in regard to love is then simplicity itself: let it proliferate.

"To slave-love, the only kind of love that authoritarian societies can tolerate, the anarchist individualist opposes free love. To sexual dependency, that is, to the dominant concept demanding that the woman be mostly nothing but pleasure-meat, the individualist opposes sexual freedom, in other words, the freedom for every individual, of both sexes, to have their sexual life under their own control, to determine it according to their desires and the aspirations of their sensual or sentimental temperament."

On the matter of "sexual education" Armand writes (when talking about "the amorous experience" he is referring to his thesis of "amorous camaraderie" such as I have been discussing):

"We believe that the truly advanced spirits of an age are the emancipators of that age, and that they should concern themselves with becoming educated by the best sex-educators available; they should never let a chance to propagate and affirm the importance of sexual education go by. A human being should know not only what delights — sentimental, emotional, physical — are reserved for us by sexual life, but also what responsibilities it implies. A serious sexual education would not ignore the problem of making procreation voluntary, nor would it ignore the thesis that "it is the woman's choice when she will conceive." Or even that "extreme" opinion that "society should allow women to choose to abort her children or to give them over to the collective for them to raise them." It would

also treat the subject of prophylactics and other precautions one should take to avoid the fearsome effects of venereal disease. The propaganda of the freedom of love is indispensable for bringing each individual to serious reflection about the negative effects of these diseases, to consciousness of their symptoms, information too often left to mystery or treated too lightly.

The individualists do not separate "freedom of sexual life" from "sexual education". And it is important that those that know teach those that don't. It is an elementary responsibility.

Contrary to the prejudices of a religious or civil order, the individualists consider the question of sexual relations in the same way as they would treat any question. They do not exclude sexual voluptuousness from the experience of life as a whole: they place it on the same level as intellectual (artistic, literary, etc.), or even moral, or economic voluptuousness. When the individualist anarchists demand freedom of sexual life — in all circumstances, inside as well as outside of marriage — they do not pronounce themselves to be in favour of nor against monogamy or polyamory. To dogmatically support the one or the other is equally anti-individualist.

The individualists ask that the amorous experience not be qualified as more or less legitimate, as superior or inferior, whether it be simple or plural. They demand that all beings instruct themselves on all these things, and that neither fathers, mothers, nor fellows take advantage of their privileged situation to keep them hidden from those who trust them and place their confidence (by the familial obligation or otherwise) in them. To each person belongs the right to determine his or her sexual life as it pleases them, to vary their experiences or to remain with a single partner; in other words 'to do as they please'...

Sentimental emancipation consists, from our point of view, not in negating, inferiorizing, or devaluing feelings, but in putting them where they belong — on the physical, physiological plane. In all walks of life there are people inclined, instead, to put their feelings (their sexual or amorous sympathies) on a metaphysical plane. Conveniently, the individualist has been emancipated from this illusion. Feelings, sentiments, are experienced perceptions, those perceptions that the self, in the presence of other not-I beings — the intuitive and sentimental self, the sexual self if you please — The sentimental impression that one or various not-“I”s produce might be more or less impulsive, alive, powerful, marked, durable: this impression is not rustic nor inexplicable; it can be perfectly well elucidated, reasoned, analyzed. It is a manifestation of the senses like the rest; it is not more nor less moral — it is, simply, “beyond good and evil.”

Sentiment is of an individual nature, but it is susceptible to education, to conversation, to intensive and extensive acculturation, like everything that is part of the domain of the senses, everything that pushes sensibility forth. One might wish to be more sentimental than one is, and this can be achieved, in the same way as one can come, through the appropriate care, to make a tree or the land produce more beautiful fruits, or larger thorns. One can, by looking carefully, learn to be a good lover, to be tender, affectionate, caring, as one can learn to be a sailor or a speaker of a foreign language. It is certainly a question of temperament, but it is also a question of will; of reflection, of the search for personal tastes.

Thus, from the sentimental point of view, everything is liberated that makes sentiments fall into place, into the manifestations of individual sensibility, between the products of the personality’s vital constitution. Everything, sentimentally speaking, is liberated that

considers feelings to be a susceptible product — like all the products of human sensibility — of development, intensification, improvement, or vice versa...

"It's not that I want the death of love, but rather I am afraid of dead love. To this I oppose living love, which breaks the chains of prejudice, tears off the masks of pride, and leaves disdainfully; that love which is above good and evil, unbridled love, flowing and unhindered, drunken, aphrodisiac love, equal and plural, generous love that no one denies. I oppose it to the pallid, coarse, limited, scarce, prudish love, ignorant of passion and adventure, that is glued to the love for one person alone like a snail is glued to its shell, a stingy love that does not give itself because it can offer so little."

It might be noted, as a closing to all this, that Armand also developed a noted, an argued, penchant for what he called "revolutionary nudism" as an accompaniment to his views about love. He saw no reason, equally, why comrades should not be amorously nude in front of each other either, reasoning that the modern desire for clothes is obligated prudery orchestrated on the basis of arbitrary human relations. There is, in his mind, nothing shameful about any human body and so, practicality aside, no reason to find in nudity any source of shame. He added to this view the further point that nudity is a great leveller which often cuts across the clothed means of designating rank. In nudity, everybody (and every body) is equal. Thus:

"To practice 'amorous camaraderie' means, for me, to be a more intimate comrade, a more complete, and closer one. And by the mere act of being connected through the practice of amorous camaraderie to your lover, you will be, for me, a closer, more alter ego, more loved comrade."

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Black seeds of transformation

Black seeds of wild anarchy

Who will sow the black seeds

Imagining survival

In this Wasteland?

Plant the black seeds

Of cooperative promiscuity

In communities of desire

Make sex into politics

Creating relations of affluence

Unlearn the logic of agriculture

Forget the reason of property

Love grows wild

Where it will

Autonomous shoots of self-actualising affinity

Like a wilderness

Will it grow

Self-organising life

Teeming with its own connections

In mutuality

Nothing grows alone

No seed survives by itself

But by life-giving relations
And desiring connections
Life begets life

Erotic life intertwines
Intimacy abounds
Resources overflow
When love and care
Become physical realities

Black seeds creating
Life in the void;
From Nothing
Comes something;
Intimate association finds a way

The principle of life
Is love meeting love
The solitary learns
Mutuality
Is life-enabling

One seed is never for itself alone
But, being planted,
It seeks out others
And joins with them

Cooperating amorously

A forest

Is an orgy of life

In which every participant

Has the instinct

To create relational wealth

Creation comes

From copulation

A common concern

To indulge desire

For pleasure

Together

You find the magic

Which escapes

The dogmatic

Authoritarian

Black seeds of transformation

Black seeds of wild anarchy and free spirits

Sow the black seeds Imagining survival

Growing a wealth of love

In this Wasteland

Green

Queer

Erotic

Love

Magic

